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## P R E F A C E

The present volume of the Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study contains the papers presented at and the proceedings of the Seminar on *Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhism and Indian Society* held at the Institute, 18-24 September 1966, to commemorate the third centenary of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. The Seminar, which was inaugurated by Sardar Ujjal Singh, Governor of Madras, was supported by a generous grant from the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, for which the Institute feels extremely grateful to the authorities of the Foundation.

An unfortunate number of minor printing errors have crept into the volume, for which we offer our sincere apologies. A list of these is appended. The volume was going through the press in Calcutta at a time when the city was in the grip of widespread industrial unrest, and this partly explains the lack of careful supervision that the printing of an academic publication demanded. Nevertheless we feel very sorry for our default.

I hope the volume will provide some food for thought among those who are interested in the study of Sikhism and Sikh society in the context of Indian history and culture.

NIHARRANJAN RAY  
DIRECTOR



PART ONE  
INAUGURATION OF SEMINAR

18 September, 1966





## INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

Niharranjan Ray

*Sardar Ujjal Singhji, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen :*

THREE hundred years ago from now was born to the ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur and his wife Gujjri, a son, who in due course, was christened Govind Rai. Guru Tegh Bahadur died a martyr to his cause—freedom of belief and one's way of life—in the hands of the Mughal authorities, when Govind Rai was only nine. At that early age he found himself recognised and installed as the Guru of the Sikhs, a community of disciples following a common ideal and a common way of life; he was thus the tenth in the line of spiritual and temporal succession from Guru Nanaka Deva and came to be known as Guru Govind Singh.

The Sikhs were a community of diverse ethnic and social groups, belonging to diverse simple callings of which a rural agricultural economy was the base, and affiliated to diverse religious cults and social institutions within the broad frame work of what is commonly known as Hinduism and Hindu way of life. But with the acceptance of the ideas, ideals and teachings of Guru Nanaka Deva and his spiritual successors, they came to discard caste and image worship and many of the associated rituals as practiced in Brahmanical Hinduism, also its anti-temporal self-mortification and asceticism, but did not choose to give up the basic metaphysical and ethical postulates of that religion and society. In tune with the spirit and dominant spiritual urge of the age—the age of Hindu and Sufi mysticism of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of Indian history and culture—they also came to commit themselves to what is commonly known as the *Bhakti mārga*, that is, to mystic devotional surrender to God as the royal road of spiritual life leading to spiritual freedom, but not to the asceticism that is often associated with certain aspects of devotional mysticism.

Almost from the very beginning, therefore, the Sikhs marked themselves out as a distinct socio-religious group, a distinctiveness featured sharper by their acceptance of proselytisation and conversion—both against the very spirit of traditional Hinduism—as legitimate ways and means of quantitative expansion of the community which was facilitated by as much their non-recognition of caste, class and meaningless rituals as by their definite recognition of the temporal, the secular way of life with as much significance as the spiritual. The temporal and the spiritual leadership offered by the Guru, the supreme head of the community, one of the basic traits of any mystic devotional faith, also helped the process to a very great extent.

It was as the Guru of this increasingly larger community, a community which was at this time rent by intrigues, plagued by strifes for power and prestige, and challenged by haughty and intolerant imperial authority and its feudal associates, that Guru Govind Singh found himself in the late seventies of the seventeenth century when he was just in his early teens. For well nigh thirty years he worked in and for this community, and when he died on 7 October, 1708, he left behind him a very large segment of the Indian population all along the western frontiers and districts of India, organised and disciplined into a strong, united, determined, self-sacrificing and God-loving, God-fearing band of men and women dedicated to the service of God and humanity, a great social and religious force to reckon with in any context, in this great sub-continent of India. Historically conditioned events and circumstances forced him to organise the community of which he was the Guru, on a footing of war and wage a life and death struggle against a powerful imperial authority that happened to be affiliated with Islam. But we must not forget that at the same time he had also to fight against Hindu feudal interests. What is important to remember is that a God-loving, God-fearing community of men and women, devotionally inspired, but by reason of their able management of temporal affairs, had come to acquire sort of a temporal and spiritual authority that invited the wrath and persecution of the then imperial and feudal authorities. That was a direct challenge to the freedom of their faith and their way of life. Guru Arjun and Guru Tegh Bahadur, the fifth and the ninth Gurus, sought to meet the challenge and died as martyrs to the cause, but

that was individual martyrdom which do not seem to have brought about any significant transformation of the community as such. Guru Govind Singh therefore came to understand and interpret the challenge in a different manner, and for about three decades of active life that was given to him, he proved to be an answer personified to that challenge to the most fundamental of human freedoms, freedom of one's faith and of one's way of life and living. In the process the Sikh community emerged as a definite religious and socio-political entity, somewhat democratised in its organisational structure, a well-organised force ready to fight, if necessary, against tyranny and injustice, against any challenge to one's faith, yet basically sticking steadfastly to its devotional and dedicated way of life.

Seen in the social context of the seventeenth century this was nothing short of a miracle, this transformation of a society brought about by one single individual. This individual was Guru Govind Singh. Times have changed, and so have the values of medieval Indian society of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We no longer think and act in terms of a God-centred, Guru-centred socio-religious community or in those of a state within a state. Yet our basic value still remains the same, the human value of the right to hold one's faith and to regulate his total life in accordance with that faith.

The holding of this Seminar as a part of commemoration celebrations of the tercentenary of the birth of Guru Govind Singh is designed not only as a tribute to that great historical personality, but also as a testimony of our faith in this basic human value. Let us approach this Seminar in this spirit, with this mental attitude.

## II

Sikhism and Sikh society as they emerged from the transformation effected by Guru Govind Singh, may be interpreted as the most significant, direct and creative response to the challenge that medieval Islamic socio-religious creed and political authority offered to contemporary Indian society. I may please be allowed to explain briefly what I mean.

India's confrontation with the socio-religious creed of Islam began within about two hundred years of Muhammad's death, and Islam in its Sufistic manifestation of perhaps both Arabic and Persian origin, started making a dent into Indian mystical thought from atleast about the tenth and eleventh century, it seems. But not until towards the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century did Islam start asserting itself as an active socio-religious creed and political authority, both backed by powerful military might.

India's socio-political response, to begin with, was one of what may possibly be described as passivity. Not that the contemporary ruling authorities did not offer any positive resistance. To be sure, they did. But the society as such, by and large, did not seem to have taken any great notice of it, and life went on as usual in a feudally organised, rural agricultural society. India had seen many foreign invaders coming in, in wave after wave, and sometimes in considerable numbers, establishing political authorities in due course, in certain areas of the land, and then as time went on, slowly but surely, getting merged into the vast ocean of India's humanity and its way of life. This had happened to the Greeks, the Śakas and Kushāṇas, the Huṇas and a host of others.

The then Indian communities did not realise that here was a socio-cultural and political phenomenon which was very much different from what they had witnessed and experienced before in their history; far less did they realise that Turko-Afghan Islam and later Mongol-Islam was different from Arabic or even Persian Islam.

But with the passage of time when the inevitable realisation dawned on the Indian society and socio-political authorities, when they saw and understood the nature of Islamic politico-military authority and the pattern of the working of the Islamic socio-religious creed making slow and steady inroads into the caste-ridden and class-structured Hindu society, the upper castes and classes, finding themselves powerless, started retiring into their own shells, and by about the fourteen and fifteenth centuries, became more or less a closed community except for those individuals and small segments that had come to be nourished by the political patronage of the alien ruling authorities.

Confined within their self-raised boundaries, this community, mainly led by the *brāhmaṇas* began to build up their resistance by tightening their social and religious codes and behaviour patterns. This was one kind of response, certainly a very negative one.

But on the periphery and outside of this closed society of upper caste and class Hindus, a process of social change was slowly taking place on more than one plane of Indian society. Mystic cults based on simple love and faith in God springing from the manner of living very close to the soil, were not altogether unknown in India. Votaries of this cult who often came from the very lower grades of society where the hold of Brahmanical Hindu codes of social discipline and religious rituals was rather very thin and loose, discovered a close kinship of spirit and behaviour pattern among the Muslim Sufi mystics whose number and influence among the common masses in the villages were considerable, despite the disapproval of official and orthodox Islam. Complete non-recognition of any kind of distinction between man and man based on caste and class differences, of rigorous asceticism of any kind, of ritualistic worship of divinity in the form of images and symbols, of differences of creeds and persuasions based on scriptural authorities, and positively, absolute surrender in love, faith, and devotion to one God-head conceived and interpreted in sort of a deep personal relationship and love for man and devotion to one's day-to-day duties and obligations of life in a simple and unostentatious manner, were some of the important tenets and principles that provided the ideological ground on which the common Hindu and the common Muslim, both bound together by an identity of interest, found a common platform. This was however of no concern to the upper strata of either the Muslims or the Brahmanical Hindus that continued to remain mutually separate, exclusive and somewhat antagonistic in spirit and attitude of mind.

But by about the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, out of this simple 'faith and devotion of simple folks arose a great movement that spread from Sindh, Gujrat and Maharashtra to Bengal, Assam and Orissa. By about the end of the sixteenth century; this movement had come to be known as the *Bhakti* movement, the history of which is more or less well-known.

Guru Nanaka Deva in common with Chaitanyadeva and Chandidasa of Bengal; Sankaradeva of Assam; Namadeva, Tulsidas, Ravidasa, Kabir, Dadu, Rajjab, all of the Indo-Gangetic Valley; Ekanath of Maharashtra; and a host of others, was a product of this general movement. But it must be remembered that each one of them came to function in a given social situation in a given region and in the context of a given tradition; in each case, therefore, the movement took different shape, form and style, though there was in each case a lowest common denominator that characterised them and at the same time distinguished them from orthodox, official and scholastic Hinduism and Islam.

A movement of this nature and of this kind of historical conditioning, may be negative in character as well as positive. *Bhakti*, as understood and interpreted in medieval India was not the *bhakti* of the classical *Śāṇḍilya sūtra* or of the *Bhakti yoga* of the *Gītā*, which was understood in the context of an intellectual, power-based and activistic philosophy, but it was an attitude based on a powerful sentiment or emotion characterised by an intense faith in and devotion to one unifying principle, call it God, or by any other name, abject and unconditional surrender of one's self to an intensely held idea in total disregard of the human situation in which one found himself. In temporal terms, it may encourage passivity and even willing acceptance of, or surrender to established authority, social, religious or political. That it was so may be very clearly felt and understood, in the social context of the time, from what the great Tulsidas who was as much a product of this movement as anyone else, sought to hold up in his great *Rāmcharitmānas*.

But Nanaka Deva found himself in a different social context. The main locale of his activities and those of his immediate spiritual successors right upto Guru Arjuna Deva, was the Punjab, where the ethnic and social composition and the traditions of the people seem to have been very much different from those of the eastern Uttar Pradesh, for instance, where Tulsidas flourished. Punjab had been witnessing and experiencing waves after waves of military and political adventures, and socio-political and cultural upheavals one after another, beginning from pre-Christian centuries. History therefore taught Punjab and her

people one very important lesson; that lesson was not to forget or be oblivious of temporal or secular situations of any given time or space, howsoever one may find oneself engrossed in matters of the mind and the spirit.

The *Ādi Granth* of the Sikhs compiled by Guru Arjuna Deva, is regarded by them as sacred as the *Koran* of the Muslims or the *Bhagavad Gītā* of the Brahmanical Hindus, or the *Old* or *New Testament* of the Christians. It is admittedly a sacerdotal text, a scripture so far as the Sikhs are concerned. Yet where else would you find such a socio-temporal consciousness as you do in this text? Consider this quotation from one of the passages: "Greed is the king and sin his minister," this in the context of the socio-political situation of sixteenth-seventeenth century India, or Guru Nanaka Deva's utterance, "He who trieth to rule over another is a fool, an indiscriminate wretch," this in the context of the hymns he wrote against the tyrannies of Babur, the first Grand Mughal. This socio-temporal consciousness is transparent not only in the writings and utterances of Guru Nanaka Deva and his successors but also in those of Guru Govind Singh, and they are very significant in the context of the times in which they lived, worked and died.

### III

But between Guru Nanaka Deva, the originator of what we call Sikhism, and Guru Govind Singh, the tenth and last of the Gurus who abolished the institution of Guru and replaced it by that of the *Khalsa*, stretches an eventful period of about two hundred years of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of Indian history as staged on the plains of both sides of the five rivers and of the Ganga-Yamuna valley. To begin with, it was just a way of life, simple, pure, transparent, divested of all dross rituals, totems and taboos, fetishes and sham distinctions of caste, etc. of popular Hinduism and committed to absolute devotion to one and only one reality—the absolute God-head without shape and form without origin and decay, without change. This was certainly a negation of Hinduism at the popular level, but it was also an acceptance of the metaphysical interpretation of the *Brahman* at a higher level, that is, at the level of pure and transparent monotheism where it could meet the challenge of the growing Islamic ideology in India. Devotional mysti



cism of the *Bhakti* movement and of the Sufi saints was slowly but surely bringing about a transformation of the traditional Hindu mind, at any rate, among large segments of the people of northern India. So when the Islamic challenge made itself manifest more and more, a deeper dive into the essentials of the indigenous traditional faith was but inevitable. Many sects emerged out of this dive: The Nanakapanthis, the Kabirpanthis, Dadupanthis, Nathapanthis, Chaitanyapanthis, and so on, ways of life, that is, *panthas* or *margas* initiated and laid down by the respective leaders. But many of these sects, gradually but inevitably, through the centuries, all but lost their identity through a process of slow dilution, into the vast ocean of popular Hinduism, even not excluding the Chaitanyapanthis or the Gaudiya Vaishnavas of Bengal and elsewhere, despite their acceptance of community worship and prayer as principles of social integration in response to the Islamic challenge. But the Nanakapanthis who later on came to be known as Sikhs, did not; rather as time went on they became more and more a solidified, unified, well-knit and well-demarcated integrated community with an identity of their own.

This did not certainly happen in a day, nor without historical and sociological reasons. *First*, unlike the other leaders and founders of similar sects Nanaka Deva was very particular on one aspect of the way of life he had initiated, namely, to take into consideration the socio-temporal, that is, the secular aspect of life with as much seriousness as the ethical and spiritual. This provided a solid material base for the community of disciples he sought to bring to being. It is significant that every Guru, from Nanaka Deva onwards, was called *Sacha Padshah*, the true king, spiritual and temporal, provided with all the symbols of royalty, who used to maintain a community kitchen which served alike the king and the cobbler. It was not without reason that small peasants, artisans and traders flocked into his fold and found there a haven of hope and security. The foundation of the city of Amritsar at a later date that was to serve not only as the holy city of the growing community but also as a great trading and commercial centre, was very significant indeed. This emphasis on the material base of life generated in the community an activist attitude towards life from the very beginning, unlike any other sect that emerged out of the *Bhakti* movement.

## NIHARRANJAN RAY

Secondly, the historical situation of the late sixteenth and seventeenth century helped the process of growth and the build up of the nature and character of Sikhism and Sikh society. Because of their secular and socio-temporal, activist attitude, the community of Nanakapanthis grew up to be more and more socially and politically conscious, than the other protestant communities. Indeed, the protestantism of the Sikhs was more total and all-pervasive. The *Ādi Granth* which was compiled by the fifth Guru Arjuna Deva sometime towards 1604, is a testament of Sikhism, a religio-spiritual document, yet here is a document that reveals in a telling manner the contemporary social situation in India where the temporal rulers were "butchers," when "greed was the king and sin his minister," when the Muslim imperial state policy was directed against the ruled majority that happened to be Hindus and when Hindu feudal rulers lived and thrived on the blood of their subjects. The Sikh community consisting mainly of men and women coming from lower stations of life had to suffer these humiliations, and this suffering slowly but surely went to build up into them a spirit of resistance. But not until the time of the sixth Guru Hargovind, after the martyrdom of Guru Arjuna Deva, this spirit of resistance started taking the form of an organised force committed to the creed of fighting oppression and tyranny, fighting affront to freedom of one's faith and way of life wherever and whenever they tried to assert themselves, whether from the Islamic imperial state or from the Hindu feudal authorities. The martyrdom of Guru Arjuna Deva and Guru Tegh Bahadur only served to help the process which was finally given a shining steel-like frame by the tenth and last Guru Govind Singh. He all but shook the edifice of the community of the Sikhs, and transformed them from a purely God-dedicated, peaceful and pietistic community to a socio-political body, spiritually awakened, ethically pure, but at the same time earthbound, dynamic, conscious, ready to fight evil even unto death, if necessary. For the first time, fear of death, the darkest and greatest of all fears, were taken out of man, death not merely in the heat and tumult of war, but death in silent defiance of the most painful and torturous tyranny, the kind of death that Banda kissed and embraced in serene faith and supreme composure only a few years after the death of Guru Govind Singh. Yet the universal God was ever their sole inspiration and ideal of social and individual activity.

In the midst of all these that seem to have been directed mainly against imperial authority that happened to be Islamic by affiliation and pattern of political behaviour and action, the *Ādi Granth* of his predecessors was installed by Guru Govind Singh as the visible image of the Gurus before him, for worship and offering, much as the *Koran* was with the Muslims, again more or less in response to the challenge of Islam. Even to this day the air and atmosphere generated by the images and symbols, the community congregations, the readings of the sacred texts, etc. within a *Gurdwara*, are not very much different from what one finds in a Muslim mosque. It all sounds like a paradox, yet this was what seems to have been brought about by Hinduism and Islam confronting each other in a given historical situation, and out of this confrontation was shaped and formed the body and spirit of Sikhism and Sikh society as they emerged from the baptism of fire and steel through which Guru Govind Singh took them. By the abolition of the institution of Guru and replacement of it by the *Khalsa*, that was supposed to represent the collective wisdom of the community and by transferring power and sovereignty to the poor of the land he gave the movement a new direction which has not lost its force and significance even today.

#### IV

This is all but past history. Later Sikh history is also well-known, and need not be recounted.

This Seminar has been planned and organised with a view to an analysis, critical and objective, and to an intelligent understanding of the historical and sociological forces that formed the nature and character of Sikhism and Sikh Society. Such analysis and understanding will, I am sure, help us formulate the basic reasons and principles that lie at the bottom of the origin and growth of such a vital social and national religious community as that of the Sikhs.

But this Seminar aims at something more as well. We want to analyse and understand the social, economic and political forces that are at work amongst them today and are shaping and forming them in the context of contemporary India and the world. It is not enough to know

that they are today the best producers of food in India, that they are guarding our frontiers and freedom, that they are a virile, active and resourceful people with a love and zest for life as significant as their love for and devotion to a life of the spirit. We need to know, again critically and objectively, wherein lie the sources of all these, and for this purpose we need to survey and analyse the Sikh society of today, its lineaments of faith and behaviour, its hopes and aspirations, its failures and despairs. We should be able to find out what is happening to the various sub-sects old and new within the Sikh community, to the *Muchis* and *Chamars* who sometime describe themselves, as I found out in Patiala, as Hindu Sikhs, to the growing industrial communities, to the Sanātani Sikhs and Sikhs who describe themselves as non-Hindus, to the west-oriented Sikh who finds his *Kēs*, *Kānga* and *Kirpan* as brakes to the demands of modern life, for instance and how all other small or big segments are reacting to the socio-political demands and changes that are increasingly being made manifest in total Indian society, all from a purely objective and sociological point of view.

This is the least that this Seminar is expected to do to pay our humble tribute to the memory of the Sikh Gurus, to the memory of that great son of India, Guru Govind Singh.

## V

We had sent out invitations to come, contribute working papers, participate in the discussion and stay with us for the duration of the Seminar, to about fifty leading scholars and writers more than half of whom accepted our invitation and the rest regretted their inability or did not respond at all. Unfortunately there have been a few last minute absences because of illness or other more pressing work. For this we feel very sorry indeed, but, I believe, it does happen in such cases, and we have to be not only content but thankful for what we have been able to bring together for our purpose. To all those who have so graciously responded to our earnest invitation and have been able to come despite their more important pre-occupations, we feel very thankful indeed.

To you, Sir ( Sardar Ujjal Singh ), we feel grateful beyond words.

Your patronage and support have made the organisation of this Seminar possible, and you have taken the trouble of coming all the way from Madras to Simla despite your heavy duties and responsibilities. We sincerely feel beholden to you, Sir.

And to all of you, ladies and gentlemen, our sincerest thanks. You are all very welcome indeed.

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS

**Sardar Ujjal Singh**

Friends,

I deem it a great honour to be invited by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study to inaugurate the Seminar on *Guru Govind Singh : Sikhism and Indian Society*. I am grateful for the same though I cannot conceal my trepidation to appear before eminent scholars.

We are assembled here to discuss how far the life and teachings of Guru Govind Singh, in particular, and the tenets of Sikhism, in general, have made an impact on the Indian society. This is indeed a very important subject and a discussion of this particular topic will cover the entire range of Sikhism, the principles upheld by the Sikh Gurus, their teachings and their own reaction to the various problems which confronted the society during the formative period and the evolution of Sikhism. This Seminar will give an opportunity to everyone—thinker, writer, devotee and intellectual—to discuss at length the main concepts of Sikhism and their impact on our society. As one who has been closely associated with the Guru Govind Singh Foundation which has taken upon itself the task of celebrating the tricentenary birthday of the Great Guru, I am happy that I have been given an opportunity to say a few words on this occasion and pay my homage to the revered Guru.

It is needless for me just now to recapitulate the life of Guru Govind Singh, for all those who are assembled here, will be familiar with his life and work, but a brief introduction will not be out of place. Guru Govind Singh, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs, was born in Patna in 1666 and was installed as Guru at the age of 9 years when his father, the ninth Guru, was beheaded by the orders of the Moghal Emperor Aurangzeb. That the ninth Guru fell a martyr to the cause of *Dharma* and Freedom of worship has been narrated by the Tenth Guru in these words :

*Dharma het saka jinkia  
sis diya per sarar na diya*

(The Ninth Guru laid down his life in the cause of Dharma but did not give up the honour).

Further,

*Tilak janju rakha prabh tanka  
Keeno bado kaloo mem saka*

(The Guru made supreme sacrifice in this age for the protection of *tilak* and the sacred thread of the Hindus ).

Guru Govind Singh himself lived only for a short span of 42 years but this period was fully crowded with remarkable events which influenced greatly the Indian society. The tricentenary birthday of the great Guru falls on 18th January, 1967 and it is fitting that this Seminar should be the forerunner of the coming celebrations. His gospel of brotherhood and love for humanity, and his ideal of service and sacrifice will ever be remembered and respected.

It is a historical fact that great leaders of thought and action, heroes and intellectuals appear from time to time in response, as it were, to the demands of the times. To attempt to give a general background, the state of society<sup>1</sup> before the first Guru came on the scene, was in ferment; new ideas were troubling men's minds; and elements which were foreign to the indigenous faith had come to hold sway. The society was completely caste ridden, pinning its faith to out-moded ritualistic and superstitious practices, hide-bound by innumerable caste regulations and conventions, dividing people into endless compartments. Politically, foreign invaders assumed responsibility for the governance of large tracts of the country and for the utilisation of all resources to secure their own ends. Alongwith the invaders came the foreign culture which had no inherent qualities to attract the indigenous population in the normal way, but the ruthless policies of the conquerors often times resulted in conversions to their own faith.

In the field of religion, the caste-ridden society showed fissiparous tendencies, leading to gradual disintegration because of the inherent

weakness of the caste system and the consequent rivalries among the different castes and sub-castes for recognition and domination. *Dharma* was slowly dying down and the people were suffering from grave disparities and exploitation. Subjugation to foreign rule, indoctrination of alien culture, demoralisation owing to cast domination and the absence of social justice with the wide practice of social discrimination and lack of reverence to human personality all these were some of the signs of the then deteriorating society. There was nothing to infuse a sense of unity and a sense of self-respect among the different sections of the population which were already groaning with frustration.

A succession of reformers appeared all through the country about that time for forging unity and strengthening the solidarity of the people. The situation called for energetic and imperative action. It was in these circumstances that Sikhism was founded. Inspired by the work of his predecessors in the line, Guru Govind Singh created a band of saint soldiers willing to lay down their lives for the protection of *Dharma* and for the freedom of the individual. Great were the qualities of Guru Govind Singh who had to fight the political tyranny and religious intolerance of those times. He was a great organiser, warrior, scholar, poet, mystic, benefactor of mankind and an emancipator. Though essentially a spiritual person, he clearly perceived and was fully convinced that the use of force as a last resort was no longer immoral. He felt that the people had to be redeemed from slavery. New courage, new vision, new forces of unity and new constructive ideas had to be preached and practised. A new revolution had to be engineered in order to set right society and restore its balance so that it could move on an even keel.

Living reality had to be coalesced with the philosophy of life which tended to be purely metaphysical. The principle of non-violence had to be properly understood, for it should not mean surrender to social injustice or helpless passivity before danger. The Guru realised that under the garb of non-violence, the populace tended to become too weak to resist evil and to arrest aggressive forces which tended to envelop the people of this country. He had to restore the sense of self-confidence in men's minds, make their hearts stout and



instil in them the necessary will power to vindicate righteousness in the face of tyranny and violence of all kinds. A new philosophy had to be taught to the people with a sense of realism and practicability. The people had to be rescued from the evils of caste system at every stage. The practice of untouchability had to be eradicated and a new process of humane and honourable treatment of man by man had to be discovered.

A reformist revolution was set in motion and the successive Sikh Gurus upheld the right of men to equality. They stood up against the principle of untouchability and pleaded for the abolition of caste system altogether. Guru Nanak preferred a low caste carpenter's house to a noble man's mansion for taking his meal. People belonging to all castes were called to assemble and partake food in a common kitchen. The chosen five who came forward to lay down their lives at the clarion call of the Tenth Guru belonged to different castes and came from different regions. *Amrit* was served to everyone irrespective of his caste label. This equal treatment was indeed a new force which spread to the society of those times. Under the direction and control of Sikh Gurus, everyone was taught to lead a life of virtue and truth, regardless of the circumstances of his birth or pedigree.

I hold that the greatest impact that Sikhism has made on society by the propagation of the ideals set by the successive Gurus was particularly in the field of equality and brotherhood which cut at the root of caste and compartmentalised living. The community as a whole acquired strength and energy. This, in its turn, developed a sense of solidarity and oneness among the people. The society which would otherwise have disintegrated totally under the weight of communal bickerings, caste quarrels, and exploitation of one caste by another, emerged as a monolithical unit, bound firmly by the fibre of equality and brotherhood. This was indeed a remarkable achievement of our Gurus.

As I have said earlier, religious concepts and practices which obtained in those days comprised mostly rites and rituals. In the confusion of the times, the division of the people was encouraged by loyalty to and worship of different gods and goddesses, ignoring

completely the spiritual side of religion. Differences in conventions and customs and modes of worship made religion as such to lose its vital character. A new strength and vigour had to be imported into the field of religion and religious practices. It had to be brought home to the minds of the people that there really existed no differences in places of worship resorted to by men of different faiths. The Tenth Guru wrote thus—

“The temple and the mosque are the same; the Hindu worship and the Muslim prayer are the same; all men are the same; it is through erroneous judgment they appear different. Deities, demons, *rakshās*, heavenly singers, Musalmans and Hindus adopt the customary dress of their different countries. All men have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body, the same build, a compound of earth, air, fire and water. Allah and Abhekh are the same, the Puranas and the Quran are the same; they are all alike; it is the One God who created all. The Hindu God and the Muhammadan God (*kartā, karīm, raṣaq, rahīm*) are the same, let no man, even by mistake, suppose there is a difference.”

The Sikh Gurus perceived that there was real lack of love among the people and, therefore, they laid great stress upon spiritual practices and preached the philosophy of one God, the Supreme Reality. They thought that there was no need for images or idols. To them, God, as the inherent source of all power and energy—omnipresent and omnipotent—is only One.

Guru Govind Singh was convinced of the morality of the use of force as a last resort and enjoined upon us to work for peace but be prepared to use force if other means failed. This needs to be carefully realised and properly appreciated. The Sikh Gurus found that the people, because of their born apathy, were being subjected to ruthless tyranny and destruction. Evil had to be resisted by force when other means failed. But there was no element of fanaticism or hatred in these teachings. The sword was taken as an emblem of power and self-respect and meant to be used as a surgeon's knife.

The Great Guru advocated the worship of the sword as the incarnation of all-pervading power which smites the tyrants and aggressors and protects the weak. This meant that people should not lack courage and manliness when their existence and natural rights are threatened and are at peril. Virtue should be organised to fight organised evil. The Guru had no enmity with Muslims as such. He only fought against the tyranny of the foreign rulers who happened to be Muslims. It may be remembered that a pious Muslim, Pir Buddhu Shah of Sadhora sent his own sons with a large number of his followers to fight for the Guru. The Mohamedan or Hindu victims of the battle were buried or cremated according to their rites. His volunteers used to supply water and First Aid to the wounded without any distinction of friends or foes. In this connection the name of Bhai Kanahya is well-known to students of Sikh history.

Guru Govind Singh was, of course, not a war-monger, but was essentially a peace-loving revolutionary. He realised that all mankind is one, and the same God pervades in all human beings. The infusion of moral spirit made the community feel itself as a compact and homogeneous unit ready to resist aggression and violence of the times. The spirit of sacrifice always went with service and went with the propagation of the moral spirit. As Guru Govind Singh advocated the worship of the sword, it helped to rid the people from a sense of frustration and slavery and made them think for themselves and resist when occasions demanded. In addition to being a great soldier, Guru Govind Singh was a versatile scholar, possessing an eloquent and forceful style of writing. It is said that he could write verses in the battle field.

Thus we see that Guru Govind Singh's contribution towards national reconstruction is unique. He founded the *Khalsa* to make the people strong and militant to take up the sword when there was need and when there was no other alternative. Sikhism does not make any distinction between temples and other places of worship. Thus, it can be seen that Sikh principles sowed the seed for national integration and unity of all sections of the population, infused a sense of manliness and a spirit of sacrifice to resist aggression and to defend ourselves against the forces of evil, instilled a sense of equality and brotherhood by

condemning untouchability and caste system and provided a common ground for all communities and faiths to seek solace on the realization of the true nature of the Supreme Reality. Toleration and respect for all religions was the key-note of the Guru's teachings, which kindled in the hearts of men the fire of faith and conviction.

The crying need of the hour is national unity and the evolution of a strong, self-respecting and well-knit society, which alone can exalt us as a really free nation. If we wish to guard our Swaraj against dangers, both from within and without, I feel that the prophets of Sikhism—and Guru Govind Singh in particular—have shown us a path which is sure to lead to peace and happiness of mankind. If the deliberations of the Seminar here guide us in this behalf, it shall have served a grand purpose. With these few words, I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Seminar.

I wish you all success.



PART TWO  
PAPERS PRESENTED



SIKHISM  
AND SIKH SOCIETY

20, 21, 22 JUNE, 1966





## STRUCTURE AND CHARACTER OF SIKH SOCIETY

**Bhai Jodh Singh**

BEFORE discussing the structure and character of Sikh society, it is but proper to give an account of the Indian society in the Punjab at the time of the advent of Guru Nanak, who was born on the 3rd of first month (bright half) of Baisakh (April-May), Samvat 1526 corresponding to 1469 A.D., in a small village named Talwandi Rai Bhoi (now called Nankana Sahib), Distt. Sheikhupura, Pakistan West. Followers of two religions, Hindu and Mohamadan, constituted the bulk of population of the province. Buddhism which had held its sway for several centuries in this part of the country was almost extinct. There was a sprinkling of Jains here and there but they invariably formed a part of the Hindu society. Bhai Gurdas who was a relative of the third Guru has given an account of the religious, social and political conditions obtaining at the time of Guru's birth in his first *var*. "Making due allowance for Gurdas's protracted employment in copying and collating the sacred volume for Guru Arjan, a task which was completed in A. D. 1604, it may fairly be assumed that Gurdas wrote his own work not much more than sixty years after the demise of Guru Nanak."<sup>1</sup> His account, moreover, is based on the observations made by Guru Nanak himself in his *Bani* (word) preserved in the Guru Granth.

The religious condition of the society is described in these words.

"Though Buddha, an incarnation of knowledge, was born in the Iron Age (*Kaliyuga*) people cannot discriminate between knowledge and ignorance. They follow their own whims and none can prevent them from doing so. Some are led to worship lifeless stones,

1. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, page XXIII (1st edition).

others to worship tombs and mausoleums. Engaged in the trickery of *Tantaras*<sup>2</sup> and *Mantaras*, some try to prove their efficacy, others dispute it, engendering anger and strife. In the midst of utter confusion,<sup>3</sup> new *Dharmas* are being preached. Some worship the moon and the sun, others pay homage to the earth and the sky. Some propitiate the god of wind, some of water, some of fire and others try to propitiate *Dharam Raj*<sup>4</sup>. These false religions thicken their veil of illusion.

About the social conditions he says :—

“The Hindus believe in four *varnas* and the Muslims in revelations of four books, i. e., the Old Testament, the Psalms, the New Testament, and the Quran. Egoism, jealousy, pride and excesses have strained their mutual relations.

The Hindus have Ganga and Banaras as their places of pilgrimage; the Muslims, Mecca and the Ka'ba. The Muslims practice circumcision, the Hindus are enamoured of *tilk* and the sacred thread. They address God as Ram and Rahim, the Reality is one and the same. Both have forgotten the real path.

Forgetting the teachings of the Vedas and the four books, they have been decoyed by Satan into the greed of worldly goods. Not caring for truth, the Brahmans and Mullahs die engaged in disputations. In this way their transmigration will not end.

As for the political conditions prevailing at the time he writes :—

The dog-faced Kali age has arrived. The kings eat carrion.<sup>5</sup> They indulge in sinful acts. The fence put up to protect the crop is itself eating it.<sup>6</sup> The subjects, too, without the knowledge of their rights, flatter them with false words. The Kazis take bribes and

2. Reference is to Nathpanthis

3. Everybody his own guide.

4. God of Death.

5. Meaning taking wealth of their subjects unlawfully.

6. The rulers were to protect their subjects from unsocial elements, but they themselves are depriving them of their wealth.

These religious, social and political conditions were to be set right by Guru Nanak and his successors and the conflicting claims of the two main groups adjusted to evolve an integrated nation. They set out earnestly to work for two hundred and fifty years to achieve this end.

“Before there was anything, before there was either death or immortality, before there was any distinction between day and night, there was that One,”<sup>7</sup> and that one willed to be many and the whole creation came into existence.

No *havans*, no sacred feasts, no places of pilgrimage to bath in,

8. An incarnation of Vishnu that supports the nether region.

nor did anyone perform worship. There was no love, no service,  
 no Shiv or Energy of his ;  
 Then were not vedas or Mohammadan books, no *smrītis*, no  
*shastrās* ;  
 The Imperceptible God was himself the speaker and the  
preacher ;  
 Himself unseen, He was every thing.  
 When He pleased He created the world ;  
 Without supports He sustained the sky.  
 He created Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv and extended the love of  
Mammon.  
 He issued his order and watched over all."

For many centuries thinking men in India have rejected gods and goddesses, and made no secret of their faith in the sole primal creator, by whatsoever name called.<sup>9</sup> In this respect, at least, the Hindus and Mohammadans could unite. Guru Nanak, therefore, proclaimed :

"There is but one God ; Everlasting and all-pervading ;  
 The Creator, immanent in His creation ;  
 Without fear and without enmity ; His being unaffected by time ;  
 unborn and self-existent ; To be known by the Grace of the Guru.  
 Meditate on Him who was true in the beginning ;  
 Who was true before the eons began ;  
 Who is true now and will be true in future."

In metaphysical conception there may be some difference in the attributes predicated of God by Guru Nanak and the prophet but the muslims generally acclaimed him as the preacher of the unity of Godhead. The Hindus too, accepted him as the preacher of the highest wisdom contained in their books and both communities got solace from his words.

But the rub came in when he preached the brotherhood of man. The Hindus were divided into four *varnas*. Their great law-giver Manu ordained that : "He, the Resplendent for the sake of protecting all the creatures, assigned separate duties to those born of His mouth, arms, thighs and feet. Teaching and studying the vedas, performing sacrifices and assisting others in doing so, making gifts and

9. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, p. LXI Vol. I.

receiving gifts ; these He assigned to the Brahmans. The protection of the people, gifts, performing of sacrifices and studying of vedas, non-attachment to sensual pleasures ; these he prescribed for the Kshatriyas. The protection of cattle, gifts, sacrificing and study of vedas, trade, banking and agriculture to the Vaisyas. God allotted only one duty to the Sudras, to serve without demur, the members of all the classes mentioned above.”<sup>10</sup>

This stratification of society has been defended and is being defended even now by Hindu intellectuals. “Man is not an abstract individual.” Says Prof. Radhakrishnan. “He belongs to a certain social group by virtue of his character, behaviour, and function in the community. When the fourfold division of society is regarded as the dispensation of the spirit, the suggestion is that spiritual wisdom, executive power, skilled production and devoted service are the indispensable elements of any social order. It is the function of the wise to plan the social order, of the powerful to sanction it, i. e., back it by authority which has force behind it, of the skilled to execute it or carry it out by the help of the devoted workers.”<sup>11</sup> The same reasoning is continued further on : “As the individual is a social being, society is the necessary means by which he attains the development of his personality. A secure place must be found for him in the community so that he can derive the utmost help from it. By his nature, man falls into four types, the man of learning and knowledge, the man of power and action, the skilled craftsman and the labourer. The types are determined by the prominent elements of man’s active nature.”<sup>12</sup>

This scheme may have worked all right when the country was under the sway of Hindu polity and a man could change his *varna* by changing his mental attitude (*swabhawa*), character (*guna*) and function (*karma*). But when population increased, it became difficult to judge the psychological make-up of every individual. Birth in a *varna* was considered sufficient to entitle an individual to the privileges and

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10. Translation by S. Kapur Singh, p. 393 of *Baisakhi* of Guru Govind Singh.

11. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 356. 2nd edition.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

duties of that *varna*. In course of time the higher classes began to attach more importance to their privileges than duties. The son of a Brahmin was a Brahmin and was on the top of the hierarchy though he had none of the qualifications to entitle him to that position. To support this latter transformation the doctrine of transmigration was pressed into supplying an argument. An individual is born in a *varna* for which he is fit according to the mental attitudes acquired in his previous birth. And to rise higher up, he must conscientiously follow the Dharma enjoined for that *varna*. "When birth acquired greater importance, classes (*varnas*) degenerated into castes. The chief features of caste are : (i) Heredity—One cannot change one's caste ; (ii) Endogamy—Every member of a caste must marry a member of the same caste and may not marry outside it ; (iii) Commensal restrictions—Regulations are imposed regarding the acceptance of food and drink from members of other castes."<sup>13</sup> To remain in the Hindu pale, the observance of these restrictions was a must for all members of the Hindu society.

But a severe challenge was thrown to this stratification when Mohammadans appeared on the scene and invaded the country. Though their religion acknowledged the brotherhood of man, in practice that equality was given to those alone who became converts to their faith. The Hindus in the lowest rung of the ladder, the untouchables and the Sudras, welcomed this opportunity. They embraced Islam to become a part of the ruling class and wreaked vengeance on those who had tyrannised over them in the caste hierarchy.

This stratification had done another injury to the society. It was the duty of the Kshatriyas to defend the country, so they alone took to the practice of arms. The number of artisans, traders, craftsmen, peasants and labourers in a society is always greater than that of those who bear arms. The whole Indian Nation did not rise as one man to defend the country. It was only the Kshatriya rulers who fought and when they were defeated, the rest of the population easily submitted to the foreign yoke. "The function of the State is

13. Ibid., p. 371.

limited to the protection of the law and defence," says Professor Radhakrishnan. "People were allowed to manage their affairs in accordance with the traditional rules and customs. They did not care who the rulers were so long as their lives were undisturbed. One flag was as good as another, if social life was carried on in the same way. This attitude has made the country a prey to the invaders."<sup>14</sup>

In plain words it means that because the people except the Kshatriyas could carry on with their *varna dharma*, which they had been taught was the sole means to their spiritual progress they showed no resentment when the foreigners ruled over them. Any student of Indian History of that period can see it as an evident fact.

But the impact of Islam on the Indian society had the effect of awakening the Hindus to the causes of their weakness and helplessness. In his preface to the *History of Sikhs*, Cunningham says: "Thus, in the beginning of the 16th century, the Hindoo mind was no longer stagnant or retrogressive; it had been leavened with Mahamedanism, and changed and quickened for a new development. Ramanand and Gorakh had preached religious equality, and Chaitan had repeated that faith levelled caste. Kubeer had denounced images, and appealed to the people in their own tongue, and Vullabh had taught that effectual devotion was compatible with the ordinary duties of the world. But these good and able men appear to have been so impressed with nothingness of this life, that they deemed the amelioration of man's social condition as unworthy of a thought. They aimed chiefly at emancipation from priestcraft or from the grossness of idolatry and polytheism. They formed pious associations of the contented quietists, or they gave themselves up to the contemplation of futurity in the hope of approaching bliss, rather than call upon the fellow creatures to throw aside every social as well as religious trammel, and to arise a new people freed from the debasing corruption of ages. They perfected forms of dissent rather than plant the germs of nations, and their sects remain to this day

14. Ibid., p 362.



as they left them. It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Govind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political right as in religious hopes."

After his beatific vision at Sultanpur which brought him face to face with the Supreme Reality, Guru Nanak resolved to give up his employment with Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi and tour the country to preach his ideas of regeneration. He kept silent for three days and when he opened his mouth he said, "There is no Hindu and no musalman". On being questioned to explain what he meant he said that the difference in ways of worship, rites and ceremonies should not divide men. The ultimate aim of religion is to attune the individual will to the will of Supreme Reality and until that is achieved mechanical performance of worship, rites and ceremonies is of no avail. The attuning of individual will should result in righteous deeds. When a muslim divine asked him whether he (the divine) was not a good muslim he replied :

"It is very difficult to be called a muslim, if one is let him be known as such :

First of all he should love religion, clean his heart of pride and desire for pelf.

When he becomes a muslim and makes religion the boatman of his life's raft he should dismiss anxiety about life and death.

He should submit to the will of God. Put faith in Him and efface his ego.

When he is kind to all living beings, O Nanak, then he may proclaim himself a musalman."<sup>15</sup>

In *Gurubani* the same thing is explained, as below :—

Some remember Him as *Ram*, others call Him *Khuda*. Some worship him as *Gosain* (Lord of the earth) other bow to him as *Allah*. He is called *Karan Kāran* (cause of all causes) *Kirpa Dhar* (merciful) and *Rahim* (compassionate). Some bathe at sacred rivers, others perform *Haj*. Some engage in *Puja*, others bow

to him in *Namaz*. Some study vedas, some the four books,  
i. e., Old Testament, the Psalms, New Testament and the Quran.  
Some wear blue clothes, other white  
Some call themselves Turks, others Hindus.  
Some desire *Bahisht*, other *Swarga*.  
But He alone, O Nanak, who attunes himself to His will, knows  
the secret of the lord."<sup>16</sup>

The Guru proclaimed, "there was only one religion and that was  
the practice of truth."<sup>17</sup>

"He who knows Him here, will know him hereafter also.  
Without knowing Him, all boast of being a Hindu or Muslim is  
in vain.  
All will have to render account of their actions. Without good  
deeds none will be saved."<sup>18</sup>

The tenth Guru repeated the same thing in his *Akal Ustat* :—

The temple and mosque are the same. The Hindu and Muslim  
way of worship does not make any difference.  
Men are the same all over, though they look different.  
Gods and demons, Yakshas and Gandharvas, Hindus and  
Turks look different but the difference is only of dress, custom  
and country.  
The same eyes have they, the same ears, the same body, its  
composition is the same, a get-together of earth, air, fire and  
water.  
Allah is no different from Abhekh, the Purān is the same  
as the Qurān. All men have the same appearance and the  
same build."<sup>19</sup>

The Gurus laid stress on right conduct. "No knowledge can  
approach the knowledge of truth, but right conduct excel it."<sup>20</sup> All  
religious strife would be over if men were judged by their deeds and  
not by their metaphysical or intellectual doctrines to which they give  
assent.

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16. *Ram Kali Guru*, V 5.9

17. *Basant Ashpadian Guru*, I, 4, 3.

18. *Var Ram Kali Guru*, 3 Slok, Guru 2.1

19. *Akal Ustat*. 16. 86.

20. *Siri Rag Guru*.

The Gurus preached against *varna* system, caste and untouchability which had disintegrated the Indian society and left them a prey to foreign invaders. Says he :

“My gosple is common for all the four varnas, Brahman, Kshatri, Vaish and Sudar. In the kali age all who meditate on the Name of God, who pervades all the vassals, will be saved.”<sup>21</sup>

In fact the Gurus divided men into two categories only—Gurumukhs and Manmukhs—those whose face is turned towards God and who practice truth, and those who follow their own whims and practice deceit, tyranny and falsehood and are engrossed in sensual pleasures.

“If clothes get polluted when soiled by blood  
How can minds of those who suck human blood be pure  
Utter the name of Khuda with a pure heart.  
Otherwise it is a trickery to deceive the world, a vain effort.”<sup>22</sup>

In short it was proclaimed : “The best of all religions is to meditate on God and engage in pure deeds.”<sup>23</sup>

Bhai Gurdas describes the Sikh society of his time as under :

“All the four<sup>4</sup> varnas have become of one hue, just as constituents of *Pan*, of four different colours, all turn red.  
All the eight metals by the touch of *Paras* have become gold. Faith in vedas or the four books does not divide them.”<sup>24</sup>

Emphasis on practical life prevented the disciples, who professed different creeds, from mutual recriminations.

“Righteous conduct leads to perfect wisdom  
Without deeds wisdom is at its lowest.”<sup>25</sup>

21. *Suhi Guru*, 5 5. 3. 50.

22. *Var Majh*, Slok Guru 1.

23. *Sukhmani*, Aspati 3. 7.

24. *Var* 7. 11.

25. *Siri Rag Guru*, 1. 3. 30.

Besides, the Guru stressed the loving service of mankind as the prominent characteristic of men of God.

“Those who love God love all”<sup>26</sup>

and

“Those who are united with Hari, are  
the friends of all men.”<sup>27</sup>

“Those who know God exult in doing good  
to others.”<sup>28</sup>

In this way toleration and loving service was woven into the structure of the Sikh society.

The institution of *langan* (community kitchen) by Guru Nanak removed the commensal restrictions observed by caste Hindus. The third Guru had enjoined that no one could see the Guru without taking food from the *langan*. And when Guru Govind Singh at the time of baptism instituted the Khalsa, all its members had to drink *amrit* out of the same vessel and eat the sacred food out of the same dish. Nay they were to put morsels in the mouth of others before eating themselves. He declared that “Members of all the four varnas had become real brothers. He was their father and Mata Sahib Kaur was their mother. By being reborn in the house of Guru all their old associations were over.” In this way he laid the foundation of a casteless society. All the Sikh temples are open to men of all creeds, colours and countries. The Sikh worship consists of reading or reciting the Guru’s word. Every line of Guru Granth Sahib is set to music and *kirtan* of Gurbani forms a prominent part of the daily service in every Gurudwara. Before the partition of the Punjab, batches of Mohammadan minstrels, descendants of Bhai Mardana, a life-long companion of Guru Nanak, took part in this service every day chiefly in the Golden temple, Amritsar, which is the holiest of holies for the Sikhs.

26. *Wadhans Guru* 1. 1. 1.

27. *Gaur Ashtpadian Guru* 5 ; 1. 6.

28. *Sukhmani Guru* and *Ashat Padi*, 8.

Buddhism had started the order of *Bhikshus*. To begin with they were good men devoted to the service of mankind, who demanded bare sustenance from the community. Similar was the case of the members of the order of *Sanyasins*. But later on deterioration set in and these anchorites came to live on alms. *Maths* were established in various parts of the country and the heads of these *Maths* had got very rich by the offerings made by the faithful and had elephants and beautiful horses in their camp when moving about. In the times of the Gurus armed bands of sadhus roamed about the country compelling the people by force to feed them on rich viands. In fact without rendering any service to the community they became an economic burden on it. Guru Nanak laid down that his disciples must earn their living by the sweat of their brow. He forbade beggary, living on alms and offerings to gods in temples.

Without knowing Him one sings His praises.  
A starving Mullah turns his home into a mosque  
To earn a living, one has his ears split.  
He becomes a medicant and loses his self-respect.  
Do not fall at the feet of the man, who calls  
himself a Guru or Pir but lives on begging.  
Those alone know the right path  
who earn their bread by the sweat of  
their brow and share it with others.”<sup>29</sup>

At Achal, near Batala, district. Gurdaspur where some yogis had gathered to celebrate the festival of Shivratri, Yog Bhangarnath twitted Guru Nanak on doffing the garb of an ascetic and becoming a householder again. Guru Nanak replied, “You give up your homes and become Sanyasins, but beg your food from householders. Are not those who support you better than you who live on their charity.” He said :

“By meditating on truth (God) the mind is illumined,  
And living among temptations one remains detached.  
The superiority of Guru’s path is that one gets  
salvation whilst living with his wife and children.”<sup>30</sup>

29. *Var Sarang Slok* Gum 1. 1. 22.

30. *Shanastri Guru*, 1. 2. 2. 4.

Bhai Gurdas stresses this point by saying :—

“He who earns his living by the sweat of his brow and serves others understands the special significance of Guru’s word.”<sup>31</sup>

He (Bhai Gurdas) condemns in very strong terms subsisting on offerings in a temple.

“Just as Hindus by tradition shun beef.  
The Muslims think it unlawful to take pork and interest on loans.  
A father-in-law regards a drink of water from his son-in-law’s house as sinful as taking of wine. Even in extreme adversity a sweeper will not eat a hare.  
Similarly unlawful is living on offerings in a temple.  
They are sugar coated poison.”<sup>32</sup>

Guru Govind Singh emphasized this point in his code of discipline.

“A Singh who observes discipline should earn his living by lawful means.  
He should minister to the needs of his household from such earning, and even by mistake should not accept offerings.  
Do not look at offerings in a temple.  
The Guru has described it as the worst sin.”<sup>33</sup>

Again

“A sikh may live by agriculture, trade or craft  
Or by any other service to the community which he likes best.  
He must persist in the business he chooses but never commit theft or dacoity.”<sup>34</sup>  
He must spend one tenth of his income in the service of community.  
“Says Govind Singh, O Nand Lal do not trust him who does not donate one tenth of his income and eats what he earns by falsehood.”<sup>35</sup>

31. *Var*, 28. 6.

32. *Var*, 35. 12.

33. *Rahat Nama*, Desa Singh.

34. *Ibid*

35. *Tankhahnama*, Bhai Nand Lal.

"Hear, O Nand Lal ! says Govind Singh, that he who does not put into the community box a portion of his earning and engages in deceitful methods of business will have to pass through a thousand hells."<sup>36</sup>

He lays down that even if a Sikh

"has to act as a *pujari* in a temple, he should take from the offerings that suffices for his bare sustenance. If he gets more he should start a community kitchen or spend it on the improvement of the Gurudwara.

If he uses the offerings solely for his family and does not spend it on good works he will suffer much pain in the end."<sup>37</sup>

The Sikh scriptures condemn the inordinate desire for possession (*mamta*). Bodily needs for its healthy up-keep can be met but the possessive instinct in man cannot be satiated. Hence a householder is asked to cultivate the virtue of contentment and live a simple life.

"Those who have much wealth are always worn by care. Those who have little wander in search of it. Happy are those alone who have neither much nor little."<sup>38</sup>

The ideal individual has been portrayed by the Guru thus.

"Rare is the one  
in this world whom  
God treasureth, testing  
him on his touchstone.  
He gives up varna and caste,  
greed and sense of 'mineness'."<sup>39</sup>

### THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN SIKH SOCIETY

Whatever may have been the position of women in Hindu society centuries before, they were classed as Sudras at the time

36. Ibid.

37. Desa Singh,

38. *Maru Anjlian Gurn*, 5 ; 1. 1.

39. *Parbhati Ashtpadis Guru* 1, 7. 7.

when Guru Nanak was born. "As a girl, she was under the tutelage of her parents ; as an adult, of her husband ; and as a widow, of her sons. Even under the liberal rules of Buddhism, a nun, however advanced in the faith, was always subordinate to the youngest novice among the brethren. Early law-book assess a woman's wergeld as equivalent to that of a Sudra whatever her class."<sup>40</sup> The Nathpanthis who controlled in those days the religious ideas of a big chunk of Punjabis described woman as a snare. Guru Nanak protested against it strongly. "Man is conceived in the womb of a woman, born of her and is betrothed and married to her. Through a woman several new relationships are contracted and the race is continued through her. When one woman dies another is sought for. She binds together a household.

Why to call her low, who gives birth  
to great men.

A woman is born of a woman - no one  
was born out but through her.

God alone is independent of a woman."<sup>41</sup>

"The mouth (whether that of a man or woman) that ever praiseth Him is fortunate and beautiful. That face shall shine in the court of the True one."<sup>42</sup>

Guru Nanak made the people's language, Punjabi as the vehicle of his teachings. Men and women were all instructed in the same way. When the third Guru appointed missionaries to spread Guru Nanak's gospel he selected worthy women also to act as preachers.

Widow remarriage was not practised among the high caste Hindus. Women were persuaded to burn alive with the corpses of their husbands to earn merit after death. The third Guru preached against this practice and permitted remarriage of widows.

The social custom of marriage has been made a religious ceremony

40. Basham A. L., *India*, London 1954 Page 177. Page 378.

41. Kapur Singh's *Baisakhi of Guru Govind Singh*.

42. *Var Asa*, slok, Guru 1, Pauri 19.



in almost all the religions. The ideal placed before the partners in Sikh society has been defined by the Guru as under :

Bride and groom are not those who only live together.  
Bride and groom are those who have two bodies but  
one soul.

For the union of two souls loving regard for each other on the part of both the partners is a must. But the society overlooked laxity in the keeping of marriage vows in the case of men. The Gurus admonished men in no uncertain terms to be fully faithful to their spouses.

“Do not cast your eyes on the  
beauty of another’s wife.”<sup>43</sup>

Bhai Gurdas discoursing on the same subject writes :

“Consider beautiful women belonging to others as your mothers,  
sisters and daughters.”<sup>44</sup>

and

“I am a sacrifice into him, who  
does not go near another’s wife.”<sup>45</sup>

A Sikh is not to think of another woman even in dream.

“Ever since I became conscious of myself  
My Guru instructed me thus :—  
O son, till you have breath in you  
Let this be thy resolve.  
You would enrich your love with your  
wedded spouse everyday,  
But let not the thought of  
another’s woman enter even thy dream.”<sup>46</sup>

In the code of discipline by the Tenth Guru he is very particular about the fidelity of husbands to their spouses.

43. *Sukhmani*, Guru 5. 1. 9.

44. *Var*, 26. 11.

45. *Var* 12.4.

46. *Dasam Granth*,

Regard another's daughter as your daughter  
 Deem another's wife as your mother.  
 He who loves his own spouse  
 Is the honoured disciple of the Guru.

He ordered his Sikhs not to marry their sisters or daughters to unworthy husbands and not to accept money in return for the hand of a girl. Infanticide was prevalent in those days in the Punjab. Girls were killed at their birth. The Tenth Guru issued a strong injunction against this evil practice and asked his Khalsa to shun the company of those who indulged in it. The Third Guru had issued instructions against the *pardah* system and a hymn of Kabir against this evil custom found a place in *Guru Granth Sahib*. At the time of marriage the consent of both the partners is necessary before the ceremony is performed. Thus the Gurus tried to remove as many disabilities as possible under which women suffered under the old codes.

### THE TRANSFORMATION

Guru Nanak had preached that to achieve salvation it was not necessary for a man to give up his worldly occupation and resort to a forest or a mountain cave for quiet contemplation. He must perform the duties entrusted to him honestly.

"Of all renunciations the best is to  
 give up lust, anger, and greed."<sup>47</sup>

He resuscitated the ideal of a *karm yogi*, who would engage in activity without desiring the fruit thereof.

"The Dharma of that vaishnav is immaculate  
 who whilst engaged in action remains detached.  
 He does not hanker after the fruit thereof.  
 Devotion to God and Singing His praises  
 is his only love."<sup>48</sup>

47. *Maru Ashtpadian* Guru 3.3, 1, 4.

48. *Sukhmani* Guru 5.2.9.

When a man lives in society and engages in some occupation to earn his daily bread, it is difficult for him to avoid contact with the Government of the day. Guru Nanak carefully analysed the conduct of the rulers and condemned it in strong terms.

“Iron age (*Kaliyuga*) is the knife, the  
Kings are butchers. *Dharma* has taken  
wings and flown away.  
In the dark night of falsehood the moon  
of truth has become invisible.  
I am perplexed in this search  
There is no way out of darkness.  
Engaged in egoistic acts people are in pain and weep.  
How will they obtain deliverance. O Nanak.”<sup>49</sup>

and

“The Kings are tigers, the headmen are dogs  
They go and awaken those sleeping in peace.  
The servants tear them with their nails,  
And the curs lick up the blood that they spill.”<sup>50</sup>

About *Qazis* who administered justice in those days he remarks :

A *Qazi* sits on the seat of justice,  
He tells his rosary and mutters the name of *Khula*.  
Taking bribes he deprives one of his rights.  
On being questioned he quotes chapter  
and verse (to justify what he does).<sup>51</sup>

The Hindus had to pay a tax to follow their religion. There was no freedom of conscience. “Temples and gods are taxed, This practice is in vogue.” He notes with sadness : “That the Kshatriyas have forsaken their *Dharma* (of defending their country) and have taken to the study of a foreign language (Persian).”<sup>52</sup>

The cause of this degradation of the subjects, he attributed to their ignorance of their rights and meek submission to the tyranny of

49. *Var Majh* Pauri 16 Slok Guru 1.

50. *Var Malar* Guru, I. 2. 22. It means that the King's servants loot the peaceful subjects and what remains is taken away by the Headmen.

51. *Var Ramkali*, I. 11 Guru 1.

52. *Dhanasari* Guru, I. 4. 1.

the rulers. In the *Asa-di-war* he says : "The blind subjects, devoid of knowledge, satiate the greed of rulers with carrion."<sup>53</sup>

The Guru realised that 'righteousness exalteth a nation.' He, therefore, preached that no religious life can be built without ethical foundations. Pursuit of truth began to open their eyes and people began to recognize the supremacy of the moral law. Bhai Gurdas declared that the Guru, the fountain-head of truth was the true king, worldly kings were false as compared to him. After the martyrdom of the 5th Guru when Guru Hargovind asked his Sikhs to take to the practice of arms, thousands of courageous men who wanted to sacrifice their lives for freedom of conscience gathered under his standard and defeated in four battles the provincial troops of Shahjahan. Peace reigned till the martyrdom of the Ninth Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur who was beheaded in Delhi by the order of Aurangzeb. Guru Govind Singh was then only nine years old. After seriously pondering over the whole situation he came to the conclusion that there was no course left open to him except resort to arms. To begin with he engaged 52 poets to render into *Braj*, the literary language of his time, old sanskrit works which may rouse his countrymen to the real state of things, and prepare them for a long struggle to free the country of the tyranny then prevailing. In *samvat* 1756 he invited all his Sikhs to a big gathering at Anandpur on the occasion of Baishakhi. From all parts of the country the disciples responded to his call enthusiastically. When the meeting was at its full, he appeared with a drawn sword from a neighbouring tent and shouted, "Is there anyone who would lay down his life for protecting righteousness (*Dharma*)."<sup>53</sup> After three such calls one Daya Ram Khatri of Lahore got up and offered his head. The Guru dragged him to the tent. There was a thud and the Guru came out with blood dripping from his sword and made the same call again. Dharma, a Jat from Hariana, offered himself for the sacrifice. The call was repeated three times more and Mohkam Chand, a Chhipa of Dwarka ; Himmat, a *Jhiwar* (water carrier) of Jagan Nath puri and Sahib Chand a barber of Bedar offered themselves. The congregation was astonished when they saw all the five Sikhs clad in new uniforms

53. *Var Asa* 1. 11., i.e., offer them bribes.

entering the assembly. The Guru prepared *Amrit* with his double-edged sword (*Khanda*) and baptized them into the order of the Khalsa. When he had done that he stood with folded hands before them and implored them to baptize him also in the same way so that he may also become a member of the same brotherhood. This action on his part made Gurdas proclaim

“Hail, Hail to Guru Govind Singh  
who himself is the Guru and himself the disciple.”

The tenth Guru, thus merged himself into the Khalsa.

After a few days he invited the Hindu Rajas of the neighbouring 22 hill principalities and asked them to join their forces with him to destroy the tyrannical rule. Their spokesman expressed surprise at this and as recounted by Bhai Santokh Singh, said, “This is impossible. The Turks own a big empire. Their resources in men and money are beyond description. Besides, their army consists of soldiers who have been wielding the sword for generations. Their one general will fall like a hawk on these sparrows of yours and finish them immediately.” “You have forgotten your old history,” replied the Guru. “Ramchandra defeated the mighty Ravana with an army of monkeys. I shall make the sparrows kill the hawks. Those renowned for their bravery will roll in dust before the Khalsa, who will challenge the tyrants, engage them in a fierce war, will lay down their own lives and destroy the foes in a protracted struggle and snatch power from their hands and rule over this land.” But the Rajput Rajas could not give up their superior position in the caste hierarchy and join the pennyless rabble, conceding equality to all and sundry. But the spirit of resistance once roused could not be put down so easily. Those who had been trampled down for centuries changed into mighty heroes and freed the country of foreign yoke.

I shall end this paper by giving an account of the character of the Sikh society from the pen of Qazi Nur Mohammad, who accompanied Ahmad Shah Durrani during his seventh invasion of the Punjab. The Qazi was so bigoted that he called them (*sag*) dogs instead of *Singhs* (lions). But seeing their bravery and character he wrote as

follows in his *Jangnama*, Chapter 41. "Do not call the dogs (The Sikhs) 'dogs', because they are lions, and are courageous like lions in the field of battle. How can a hero, who roars like a lion in the field of battle, be called a dog. If you wish to learn the art of war, come face to face with them in the field." He goes on praising their skill and in the end says: "Truly they are like lions in battle and at the time of peace they surpass *Hatim*." He goes on extolling manipulation of swords and spears and adds: "The body of everyone of them is like the piece of rock, and in physical grandeur, everyone of them is more than fifty persons. It is said that Bahram-Gore killed wild asses and set the lions shrieking. But if Bahram-Gore were to come face to face with them, even he would bow before them." He then gives an account of how expertly they use their guns and extol their tactics in actual warfare. How a single battalion of theirs entered Multan, so strongly defended by the muslim armies and devastated the city. He continues: "Leaving aside their mode of fighting, hear you another point in which they excel all other fighting people. In no case would they slay a coward nor would put an obstacle in the way of a fugitive. They do not plunder the wealth and ornaments of a woman, be she a well-to-do lady or a maid-servant. There is no adultery among these dogs, nor are these mischievous people given to thieving. Whether a woman is young or old they call her a *Buddhiya*, and ask her to get out of the way. The word *Buddhiya* in the Indian language means 'an old lady.' There is no thief at all amongst these dogs, nor is there any house-breaker, though their behaviour on the whole is not commendable."<sup>54</sup>

These lines were written about 56 years after Guru Govind Singh's demise. I do not pretend to suggest that the lofty standard of character delineated by an enemy is still maintained. But there are certain characteristics which the Sikhs still possess. They have been adjudged best peasants. They are good mechanics and craftsmen. They are among the best soldiers that India produces. The spirit of resistance inculcated by the gurus is still there. There is no priestly class amongst them and hence they are the least superstitious of all the residents of this country. They will adopt any progressive plan

54. Translation by Dr. Gaiinda Singh.

that will benefit the community and the country. During the Gurudwara movement they revived some of their old traits of character and after four years of peaceful agitation and immense sacrifice they achieved what they wanted. They were in the vanguard of the Gadar party in America, and I may safely assert, made proportionately more sacrifices to achieve independence. Now they are settled on the borders of India and the country may rest assured that they will do their best to guard its safety and integrity.

## EVOLUTION OF THE HEROIC CHARACTER

**Gurbachan Singh Talib**

IN the personality of Guru Govind Singh the aspect which has received almost exclusive emphasis is that of the liberator, the crusader against tyranny and oppression. This no doubt is the most striking quality, and it has ever appealed to the millions who during the two and a half centuries and over have sought the inspiration for their lives from his personality. In contradistinction to the other preceptors of the Sikh faith he is thought of as the warrior, the hero, with a resplendent, knightly figure fighting against tyrants and evil doers, somewhat like Saint George of the Christians. The descriptive names by which he is known are indicative also of glory, might and heroism, such as the Lord of the Plume, The Lord of the Hawk, the Protector of Faith—all evocative of noble heroism and chivalry. His figure is conceived of as the Rider on the Bay Charger, shooting gold-tipped arrows and destroying in single combat tigers and other wild beasts. He is ever heroic in the thick of the battle, fighting without hate or rancour, merciful even to the foe. In suffering he is always unruffled, bearing misfortune with equanimity of spirit as destined by the Timeless Creator, who sends to man life and death, joy and sorrow, as it may suit His inscrutable purposes. This faith buoys him up even in the midst of the greatest misfortunes which mortals can be called upon to bear—the loss of all his dear and near ones, including all his children, and the death in battle of his bravest followers, dearer than the children of his flesh. All this is enshrined in the popular imagination, and is substantially the true picture of his personality. This picture has been emphasized and re-emphasized all through these two and a half centuries of the history of the Sikhs—a page in history which is unexcelled in the record of the struggle of man for the preservation of his spirit unconquered against overwhelming forces of oppression and tyranny.



In this picture of hero, crusader, liberator, the element which tends to get somewhat obscured is that of the saint; the man of God, who lived every moment of his life in contemplation of the Eternal, and sought to guide his steps by His will and behest. Concentrated in the personality of the Guru was the faith and the spiritual vision evolved by his predecessors in the Sikh Church, from its founder Guru Nanak onwards, who had reiterated among the people the faith in the One Uncreated Being, formless, unbounded by attributes, yet the source and concentrated sum of all attributes—the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer—the Cherisher of righteousness and destroyer of unrighteousness. It is by this faith and its ideals that the peculiar quality of Guru Govind Singh's heroism was fostered—this made him the mighty liberator, the creator of the chivalrous order of the Khalsa, charged with the task of waging relentless war against tyrants and oppressors. To trace the formation of the heroic character as revealed in the personality of Guru Govind Singh and the heroes and martyrs of Sikhism through faith and spiritual and moral discipline, would indeed be highly rewarding study in the deeper aspects of the religious personality. The strength of the hero is the strength of his soul, in which purity of motive and purpose lends to man the strength to face the demands of a life of relentless struggle against pitiless forces and to overcome them both as martyr and as hero. This is in consonance with the Indian philosophical tradition, which has mythologized the might of Shiva or Rudra as attained after eons of rigorous penance in the freezing snows of the Kailash, or of the stony-hard limbs of the hero Hanuman, moulded after his long *Bhakti* or devotion to Rama, the God-man. It is the ascetic (*Yogi*) Shiva and his warrior-consort Durga who in her incarnation as Chanddi fights the battles of the gods when they are oppressed by the evil force of Asuras or Demons.

#### A NEW EMPHASIS

While the Indian tradition has not chosen to mythologize any episode of martyrdom, as this idea is understood and absorbed by, for example, the Semitic or the modern mind, and has always shown the oppressor as destroyed by the intervention of divine vengeance when bent upon his career of inequity and evil, the Sikh religion has

provided numerous examples of heroic martyrdom and has enunciated a faith in which martyrdom is viewed as a necessary process in making the purposes of God prevail. This heroism, born of such spiritual idealism and asceticism is, of course, a kind of sword-arm of the Divine Will, and it is through such heroism alone that the universe is from time to time rescued from the grip of evil and is made to fulfil God's purposes.

It is with such idealism and faith in the ultimate victory of righteousness after war with evil that Guru Govind Singh, in his autobiographical narrative fragment, *Vichitra Natak* (the wonderful drama) has revealed his mission. There is prominent emphasis on a long life of austere spirituality as the source of his power to wage war against evil. Thus the story runs :

‘Now shall I narrate my own story ; and how I performed austerities : At the spot where the mount of Hem Kunt is situated, is the peak of Sapt Shringa. This is the spot where the Pandavas practised yoga. Here it was that long I performed austerities, and invoked the aid of the Timeless Might. Through the force of such austerities, my self was merged into the Divine Being. So also did my father and mother contemplate the Inaccessible, and perform the practices of yoga ; then did the Divine Lord shower His pleasure on them. When the Divine Will was revealed to me, I took birth in the *Kali Yuga*.’ After giving in brief the history of the abuse of the divine mission to convert mankind to the worship of the True Lord by the generality of teachers and prophets, who instead set themselves up into deities, the Guru thus defines the mission entrusted to him by the Lord :

‘I have exalted thee to be my own son,  
To propagate the true faith.  
Go there into the world,  
And turn mankind away from senseless practices.’<sup>1</sup>

Further on the account proceeds in the Guru disclaiming divine attributes to himself, which in the Indian tradition would only be too possible :

"Any who name me Supreme Being  
 Shall all fall into the pit of hell.  
 Know me to be His servant  
 Understand this to be without a doubt true.  
 I am servant to Supreme Being,  
 And have come into the world to witness its play.  
 I speak the word as I have heard it from the lord ;  
 And suppress not Divine Truth for fear of mortal man."<sup>2</sup>

Then, after some more verses defining his faith, the Guru proceeds

'For this Have I come into the world :  
 The Lord God sent me for the protection of the Truth (*Dharma*) ;  
 That I spread the truth everywhere,  
 And defeat and destroy the wicked and evil-doers.  
 For this mission have I taken birth,  
 Let all holy men know this in their inmost minds :  
 To spread the truth, to uphold holy men,  
 And to extirpate the wicked root and branch."<sup>3</sup>

This longish extract will help in forming a clear idea of the crusading mission against the forces of tyranny and evil established in the age in which the Guru lived. The history of India during the later Mughal period, particularly the reign of Aurangzeb, is a record of religious fanaticism and oppression let loose by an oligarchy which exercised its unbridled despotism over the masses of the Indian people. The only sanction which might restrain such oppression was armed revolt on the part of such sections of the people as could so rise. All despotism and tyranny is of course humiliation to the sufferers and by a malevolent law of human nature, there is a strong element of sadism in all exercise of arbitrary power. There was in the process of this exercise of power little sparing the feelings of the Hindus and as a matter of fact non-Sunni Muslims too. In the days of the earlier Mughal emperors something like a countrywide peace prevailed and although the Hindus suffered some of the disabilities of aliens in a soil which was by right theirs, things did somehow continue for centuries without flaring up into a religious war. The humiliating enactments of Aurangzeb, such for example as the reimposition of the *Jaziya*, the demolition of Hindu places of worship, the

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

imposition of restrictions on erecting new temples and on the teaching of Hindu faith and such other acts roused the spirit of vengeance among the victims, and a movement of resistance began which ultimately destroyed the fabric of Mughal rule.

In this resistance the Sikh religious movement played a pivotal part in the Punjab. As a matter of fact, while resistance was sporadic in other parts of the land, or dynastic and feudal, as in the case of few Rajput clans, the Sikh resistance was inspired with a high sense of mission which the Gurus and their followers felt called upon to achieve and to fulfil. Hence it was that this movement acquired certain unique features. In the first place, it had a continuity and a stamina which enabled it to carry on one of the grimmest struggles in the history of man against the most savage tyranny for over three quarters of a century. Then, it was in the true sense a peoples' movement, in which the leaders were thrown up by the masses of peasants, artisans and other classes ranking low in the Hindu caste classification. All these leaders were not only men of ability and character in the usual political and military sense, but owed their leadership primarily to their being men of religion and piety, who held uncompromisingly even in the face of horrible torture and death, to the mission which they felt they had been charged by the Guru to fulfil. It was these features which turned the Sikhs not only into steadfast, hardy warriors and martyrs, and established among them something akin to a democracy or federation of clans, but also made the entire Sikh people into an approximation of the idea of a nationhood, in which the bond of a common soil and commonly held ideals might be the cementing force. In those times people thought at the most in terms of tribal or sect loyalties. This of course, has not stood in the way of the Sikhs merging themselves into the concerns of the larger Indian nation, as historical forces during the nineteenth century and after having forced the idea of Indian nationhood. But that is another issue.

#### **FORMATION OF THE HEROIC CHARACTER**

There has been a distinct course of evolution within the Sikh faith since the time when Guru Nanak preached the worship of the Eternal Unborn, Formless God and the supremacy of a pure life over

rituals and creeds. The evolution was towards what it would not be inappropriate to call an expanding social and national consciousness. As has been said on many occasions, the germs of the later manifestation of heroism and armed resistance were present in the original ideals which Guru Nanak enunciated and preached. Only there was a change—a vast and significant change indeed—in emphasis. Sikhism, while it greatly stressed the purity and integrity of the individual life, has at the same always set its face against the life of the recluse. It would not take long to establish this manifest thesis. The Gurus were themselves all householders, and encouraged their followers to set up in various callings, trades and occupations. Religion was the inspiring spirit in a man's daily life, and not an over arching influence which might wean him away from the world of corporate social life. Guru Nanak, and all his followers to Guru Govind Singh have been critical of the austerities and ritualistic practices which obscured from man the need for a life of purity and virtue. The man of God is to live in this world, to practice righteousness and truth but not to be of it. He must bear in his heart *vairag* or renunciation, but must on no account retreat from the scene of action. His renunciation must consist in his refusal to immerse himself in the pleasures of life, which are the source of selfishness and sin. 'This earth is the home of the lord,' says the Holy Granth, 'the Lord hath His abode in it.' Hence the injunction against its renunciation. The consequence of such an attitude was that the Sikh Church was always extremely sensitive to the social and political milieu, as it was shaping in contemporary India under Mughal rule. While ascetics and recluses were not immune from persecution and tyranny, as is clear from the stories of the persecution of such men, both Hindu and Muslim, like Kabir, Namdev, Sarmad the mystic and numerous others, the Sikh Church with its potentiality for becoming a force which in time might become dangerous, did not escape the watchful eye of the Mughal rulers. Hence it was that Jahangir found pretext to send to death the holy Guru Arjan, fifth in the line, the saintly and divine singer of hymns of the glory of God and of overflowing love and tenderness for all mankind. In Guru Arjan's time the Sikh faith was acquiring an organization and form which made the rulers look upon it as a potential political force. Henceforth, as is well-known, the Sikhs thought of the sword in addition to the rosary, each symbolic of a certain

attitude towards life. The sword and the rosary, of course, as has been stated earlier, never got separated, and heroism continued and continues still, among the Sikhs to be spiritually religiously inspired. This fusion of two forces kept the Sikh spirit of heroism idealistic, and despite many deviations at the hands of ambitious individuals; has kept it close to its original fount of inspiration and has largely insulated public life against the inroads of corruption.

### THE ROSARY AND THE SWORD

In the religious writings of the founders of Sikhism, and in the history of the Sikhs, at least while the religious inspiration was powerful, and influences like empire with their tendencies to change the descendants of heroes and martyrs into feudal chiefs had not brought in a confusing note, two distinct strains are noticeable: These are a spirit of idealism and humility and secondly, the conviction of a mission with which the man of God felt charged in this world to combat and destroy unrighteousness and tyranny. There has been a change of emphasis from one to the other strain, particularly after witnessing the martyrdom at the hands of the tyrannical power of the rulers of two of the holy Gurus—Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur. These outrages convinced this growing sect of peaceful, religious minded people of the need to add the sword to the rosary as the symbolic equipment of their faith. Thus, Guru Hargobind, son of the martyred Guru Arjan on occupying the seat of guruship replaced the traditional rosary by two swords, symbolising spiritual and temporal power. His seat, instead of being called the 'cot' as heretofore, was now called a 'throne,' which spot has since served as the central cathedral of Sikh spiritual authority. This is the famous Eternal Throne (*Akal Takht*), facing the Hari Mandir or Golden Temple at Amritsar. Guru Hargobind was detained too for a period by order of Jahangir, but was later on freed. He fought several skirmishes with the royal troops, and ultimately retreated into the hills beyond easy reach of authority. His son, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth in the line of guruship, was beheaded by order of Aurangzeb in Delhi in 1675, leaving behind him his young son, nine years old, who was later to create the heroic force of the Khalsa, and to leave such impress on the history of India. Guru Tegh Bahadur

set himself up to create resistance to Mughal persecution among the people of Punjab, of what is now called Haryana and the areas surrounding Delhi. This resistance was intended of course, to spread and to bring to an end the helpless suffering of the people. This was undoubtedly the first instance of such resistance to the policies of a powerful empire in India, on such a vast scale. Its character was also distinct, in as much as that it was aroused neither by ruling chiefs as in the case of the few Rajput princes, who revolted, nor by a feudal lord, such as Shivaji Bhonsle, but by a widely respected saint, whose only hold over the people was his holy way of life and his persuasive word. It was thus, in modern parlance a true peoples' movement. That obviously alarmed the Mughal authorities, and by the usual process of obtaining a verdict against the Guru from the *ulema* as spreading opposition to Islam, he was beheaded after torture and disgrace in Chandni Chowk.

#### SIKHISM AND THE HEROIC PAST OF INDIA

To revert now to the two strains which are visible all through the ideas which were moulding the Sikh character, it will as well be useful to relate these to the traditions of religion as these have grown in India for thousands of years. As has been implied earlier, according to the Indian point of view, heroism is the fruit of the penance and prayer of the man of God, of which the archetype and symbol is Shiva. The principle of incarnation or *avatars*, which is the basis of traditional Hinduism, postulates the assumption of human or other forms by Vishnu, the Preserver, to restore the balance of Truth and Righteousness in the universe, when these are disturbed and menaced by rampant evil. That is what comes out, among other numerous texts, in the famous declaration of the Lord in the Gita, that He takes birth whenever righteousness is seen to fall into decline. Sikhism does not inculcate faith in the doctrine of incarnation of the Creator—as a matter of fact, all through in the Sikh scriptures such an idea is emphatically repudiated. But while the idea that the Divine ever assumes the human or other shape is rejected, the holy men are asumed to be spiritual guides, perceivers and heroes rather than gods. The ethical idea underlying this doctrine is reiterated in the teachings of the Gurus most forcefully.

To a literal faith in the incarnation of the Divine, the ethical—spiritual interpretation is given (and about the character and assumptions of such interpretation no ambiguity is allowed to remain) that the sway of evil is eternally challenged by the spirit of idealism in man, which despite suffering and sacrifice, must fulfil its function so as to challenge evil. This faith and vision is integral to Sikhism, and the Gurus, as has been said earlier, far from preaching a retreat from the affairs of the world in the way of the recluse, have constantly acted and striven to bring into the world the reign of truth. Guru Nanak has given expression in some of his hymns<sup>4</sup> to the agony and suffering of his soul at the spectacle of the destruction and degradation caused in the Punjab by Babar, the founder of Mughal rule. This is, however, not a mere static lament, but is of the nature of a profound meditation on the moral law which operates in shaping the history of nations and peoples. Defeat and degradation is the result of a life of selfish indulgence and goallessness. Those who are indifferent to the demands of the moral life, must suffer as did the Pathan rulers of India in their encounter with Babar. Babar is the scourge. His invasion is the source of so much suffering to the innocent and the guilty alike. Mysterious are the ways of the Lord, who shall argue with him? But, in words the pathos of which still wrings the heart after these centuries, the Guru addresses the question to the Creator: These (the Indian people) have wailed and cried under the conqueror's lash, didst thou not feel pity for them?

#### MARTYRS AND HEROES

Such was, as the Guru expressed it, the mysterious dynamic of history. There is evil and there is suffering. Man has constantly to struggle to defeat this evil. The man of God must not shrink from taking on himself suffering if necessary. In this struggle God will of course be on the side of the righteous and the holy. His purposes must prevail, but whereas in the traditional Indian mythology the *Rākshasas*, symbolizing evil, are destroyed by the miraculous

4. Quoted below in excerpts.

5. Page 360.



intervention of the deity or the *avatāra*, whose bolt smites the head of the demon just when he is about to perpetrate the most heinous outrage. In the Sikh religious thought only the ultimate triumph of good is assured after long travail and suffering and self-sacrifice on the part of the good and the holy. This is what introduces into Sikh thought the idea of martyrdom as the means towards reassertion of good. The imagery of the compositions of the Gurus is so powerfully evocative of the experience of suffering that it leaves no room for the illusion that suffering is something distant or unreal or that it can be annulled by a miracle. The faith expressed by the Gurus is not in the annulment of suffering, but in the patient bearing of suffering as the mysterious way in which righteousness must triumph. To the man of God joy and sorrow are alike, and his spirit is attuned to passing through the one as through the other with the same equanimity. The experience of suffering is one of the constantly recurring themes of the meditation of the Gurus. Says, Guru Nanak.<sup>6</sup>

‘The soul hungers after the True Name :  
By such hunger are all sorrows consumed.’

(*Asa*—page 9)

In another hymn again :<sup>7</sup>

‘Fear has gripped my heart ; to whom shall I  
express my travail ?  
My only recourse is to the Annuller of suffering.  
the Ever-Bountiful Lord.’

(*Dhanasari*—Page 660)

The fourth Guru, in the course of a hymn says :

‘If thou sendest me hunger O Lord, I feel still filled, and in  
suffering too find joy.’

(Page 757)

6. This is the point in emphasizing which Sikhism distinctly stands out from the other medieval religious movements, labelled as *Bhakti*.

7. In the great epic *Suraj Prakash*, Guru Arjan is reported also to have preached thus :

‘Fight with the tyrants who oppress the humble—  
Therein lies true piety.’

The work of Guru Arjan, who was subjected to unbearable tortures by the fiendish sadistic minions of Jahangir, is a constant anticipation of suffering to be undergone in God's cause. Yet his word is also one constant paeon of joy in God and in submission to His will. What is at the basis of such expression of bliss is not the hope of a miraculous annulment of suffering, but the transmutation of inevitable suffering through resignation and submission into the experience of bliss. Below are a few excerpts from the word of Guru Arjan, illustrative of this theme :

1. One who is in the extreme of difficulties,  
without succour and support from any one,  
And is beset by implacable foes, and  
deserted even by his kith and kin ;  
Is bereft of all shelter and  
hope of finding refuge  
If such a one contemplate the Supreme,  
Lord, not a breath of hot air shall touch him.  
(p 70)
2. One in whom is the love of the Lord,  
All suffering, pain and doubt shall flee from him.  
(p 186)
3. Lord, those who have Thy succour  
No suffering shall touch them.  
(p 186)
4. Under the wing of the Lord not a hot  
breath of wind will touch me ;  
I am begirt with the miraculous  
protective Arc of Rama—suffering fails  
to penetrate to me.  
(p 819)
5. Saith Nanak, my life has been one long-joy. This  
life's night has been a time of bliss.  
(p 1209)
6. Whatever be thy will O Lord, it is sweet to me :  
All I crave is the wealth of Thy Name.  
(p 394)
7. He who leans on the strength of the Lord,  
All his desires are fulfilled ; no suffering  
touches him.  
(p 1223)

Guru Arjan who could bear with inhuman torture at the hands of his persecutors, lived such a life as is expressed in one of the sublimest passages in all religious poetry by a devotee, Bhai Gurdas, who was closely associated with him all through life. It is alone from a life so lived that such martyrdom can come.

‘As the fish are one with the waves of the river, so was the Guru immersed in the River that is the Lord. As the moth merges itself at sight into the flame, so was the Guru’s light merged with the Divine light. In the extremest hours of suffering he was conscious of nothing except the Divine Lord, like the deer who hears no sound but the beat of the hunter’s drum ; Like the bee who is wrapped inside the lotus he passed the night of this life as in a casket of joy ; Never did he forget to utter the Lord’s word, even as the chatrik never fails to utter its cry ; To the man of God joy is the fruit of devotion and meditation with equanimity in holy company. May I be a sacrifice unto this Guru Arjan.’

(Var 24)

The theme of resignation and self-surrender to the Lord is at the core of the teachings of the Gurus. Open the Holy Granth at any page, and in hymn after hymn is expressed the ideal of life as issuing forth in a spirit of humility and submission. As against egoism, the spirit of viewing all life in terms of pampering the self, and the consequent attitude of discontent and dissatisfaction, the Gurus preached what is at the core of all Indian idealism—renunciation and humility. Only in their system renunciation involved not a retreat from the normal concerns of existence, but the sacrifice of inordinate desire and freedom from the five forms of evil enumerated by the traditional ethical philosophy of India. Through innumerable similes and images this point is brought home to the devotee. The man of God is like the *Haṁsa*, the Swan who has the power to separate the milk of spirituality from the water of worldliness. Thus does the man of God reject the ephemeral pleasures of the world, and enrich his soul only with the joy in the Eternal. By another simile, that of the Lotus, the man of God is seen as resting on the water of the material world without being touched by it. Says Guru Arjan in his famous composition, *The Sukhmani* :

‘The saint is ever undefiled as the Lotus,  
Untouched by the water on which it floats.

Spiritual bliss and joy imperishable, which overcomes all suffering, as experienced and bodied forth in their word by the Gurus, is the fruit of this spirit of renunciation of egoism. The recluse and the ascetic are not the highest type of man. They are viewed as fugitives from life, which demands of man a perpetual struggle with evil within the self and in the outside world, so that righteousness can be made to prevail. In his discussion on matters spiritual with the *Sidhas* (saints) on the heights of the Himalayas, Guru Nanak is reported in the words of Bhai Gurdas to have expostulated with them on their retreat from the world : ‘The Saints have retreated to the mountain heights, who may then bring salvation to mankind ?’ (*Var-1*)

Not a retreat away from the theatre of the perpetual struggle against evil in the world, but endeavour in the way of a pure life, to seek salvation and to bring salvation to millions—such is the ideal as envisaged by the Gurus. At the end of his philosophical-spiritual composition, the *Japji* (Prayer Recitations), Guru Nanak sums up thus the end of the spiritual life :

‘Those who have meditated on the Name, have  
indeed made heroic endeavour,  
Saith Nanak, their faces are illumined with  
the light divine, and through them  
countless others have obtained salvation.’

The accent is on the man of God scattering the seed of his spirituality all around, so that others may participate in his God-consciousness and idealism.

Humility is stressed as the quintessence of the noble and righteous life. To forgive and to live at peace with all mankind is the way of godliness. The Gurus have expressed themselves thus on this theme :

1. Make forgiveness and patience thy milch-cow ;  
Thus will the calf of thy soul be fed with the  
milk of spiritual bliss.

(Guru Nanak, p 1329)

2. Humility is my mace ; self-effacement is the  
spear I bear.  
(Guru Arjan, p 628)
3. With forgiveness, self-discipline, noble conduct  
and contentment as my support,  
Neither sickness nor the torments of death afflict me.  
(Guru Nanak, p 223)
4. The lowliest of the lowly—the most despised  
among the castes—  
Nanak stands by them—he emulates not the  
great and the proud.  
Lord, Thy favour and mercy fall  
on the land where the lowly are cherished.  
(Guru Nanak, p 15)

The attribute by which Guru Nanak is known most is *Patit-Pāvan*, the sanctifier of the fallen. This truly reflects his vision and ideal. This theme, as said earlier, is pervasive in the compositions of the Gurus and the Bhaktas like Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, Farid and others whose hymns were approved for inclusion in the body of the holy *Granth* by the compiler, Guru Arjan.

Idealism in the form of non-attachment is also a constantly recurring theme in the spiritual and ethical compositions of Guru Gobind Singh, who combined with his character of hero the ideals of the saintly life. As a matter of fact, this fusion of the saintly character with the heroic is the special feature of the evolution of Sikhism, which it is the endeavour of the present paper to show in its different facets.

Heroism is no less the pervasive theme of the Sikh scriptural texts, but this is such heroism as is the final reward of a life of truth and righteousness. The men of God are designated by Guru Nanak in the wonderful concluding portions of the *Japji* as 'mighty heroes, in whom is infused the spirit of the Lord.' The bearers of heroic virtue among the women are like Sita, whose noble beauty is beyond description.

Again, the man of God, without fear of worldly power and apprehension of what the evil of man can do, is the true hero. It

is out of men bearing such a character that martyrs and heroes are made. The man of God continues fearless on the path of righteousness, secure in the faith that God covers him over like a shield. One of the favours which the man of God asks of the Lord is to be rendered fearless. Man is in fear as long as he is attached : it is his moral weakness which presents to him the spectre of fear. In the *Sukhmani*, God is called 'dispeller of fear, effacer of folly, and the protector of the unprotected.'

Guru Arjan reiterates it as the special favour of the Lord to His servant to send him the gift of fearlessness.

Guru Nanak emphasizes truthfulness to be the especial attribute of the pure in spirit. Only those who have attained to true heroism dare utter the true word in the face of tyranny and persecution. This is the theme of the Guru's hymn, addressed to his host, the humble carpenter Lalo, in the midst of the carnage by Babar's victorious hoardes. Sparing neither Babar, the tyrant, nor the defeated rulers and people of India, who had forgotten God and righteousness, the Guru says, in words flaming with the spiritual passion :

'I utter what the Lord puts into my mouth' : Babar has descended upon India with his wedding party of lust, and unrighteously demands the surrender of the womanhood of India. Decency and religion have hidden their faces from sheer terror ; unrighteousness struts about in triumph. Muslim and Hindu priests are all thrust aside ; The devil is now making unholy marriages all around. Nanak, in this carnage everywhere rise wails and laments. Blood flows all around to serve for the ritual saffron ; Spare not to speak. Just, however, is the Lord and Just is His doom ; He is just ever. (Those who live in sin) their life's garment shall be torn to tatters and shreds—let India remember my warning :

(p 722-23)

### THE TRANSFORMATION UNDER GURU GOBIND SINGH

The transformation effected by Guru Gobind Singh in the Sikh character, seen in the total background of Sikh thought and the

prevailing ideals would appear to be in the nature of fulfilment of an urge which had all along been the basis of the faith communicated by the Gurus to their followers. Prominent in the Sikh mind was the image of the Creator as the foe and avenger of tyranny and evil.<sup>8</sup> This faith was, of course, handed down to the Gurus and the Sikh from the ancient past of India. Scattered all through the *guru-vāṇī* or scripture is the faith in God as the rescuer and succourer of the pure and the innocent from tyrants and oppressors. In the Indian past this idea had been transmuted into mythology, and numerous legends of the destruction of demoniac powers at the hands of the various forms that divine vengeance took, were current among the people. Belonging to the primeval past are the legends of the destruction of *Asuras* like Śumbha and Nisumbha, Mahishāsura and such others at the hands of Durgā or Devī (the goddess par excellence) known by various names, such as Bhavānī, Chāṇḍī, Bhagavatī, Chamuṇḍā, Mahākālī and many more. This legend has been poetized again and again, by Guru Gobind Singh himself and by the poets residing at his court. This legend with its power to instil heroism and breathing in fierce intensity the spirit of endeavour was treated as the basic symbolic epic, to rouse the spirit of crusading zeal and sacrifice among those whom the Guru wished to prepare to take the sword against the oppressor of his own day.

There are then, the legends of the *avatāra* Narasimha, destroyer of the godless tyrant Hiraṇyakaśipu or Harnakash; of Rāma who humbled the pride of the arrogant Rāvaṇa; and of Kṛishṇa, the destroyer of the murderer Kāṁsa and other tyrants. In the Sikh tradition are embedded more recent stories of the men of God succoured by Him, such as the saint of Maharashtra, Namdev, who was produced before the Sultan of his day; and the great Kabir, arraigned as a heretic. Guru Ramdas, the fourth apostle was slandered by a Khatri of the Marwaha clan, but his slander only recoiled on him. The Guru has narrated the incident in a hymn of thanksgiving. His son Guru Arjan was sought to be attacked by a petty commander, Sulahi Khan, under the instigation of his own elder brother Prithia, smarting with chagrin at being passed over in nomination to the

8. Gur-Sura, literally the Heroic Lord (p. 293).

Guruship because of his crooked worldliness. It happened that Sulahi, while he was proceeding to attack the Guru with a force, fell into a burning brick kiln, and was charred to death. Guru Arjan has sung a song of thanksgiving on this deliverance. Note the imagery, expressive of the might of the Lord to destroy and uproot tyrant. Such imagery is significant, as coming from Guru Arjan, whose heart was overflowing with gentleness.

‘Sulahi is rendered powerless to harm ; he  
has died wrapped in impurity.  
The Lord, at one stroke of the axe smote his head ;  
in a moment he was reduced to ashes.  
He was destroyed, involved in his evil designs ;  
God who created him pushed him on to his death.  
The power of his arms and his supporters,  
his wealth—all shall cease to be ;  
he has been wrested away from kith and kin.  
Saith Nanak, I am a sacrifice to the Lord  
who made good the word of His servant.’

The God worshipped by the Gurus has the attribute of might to destroy evil, when it is rampant and becomes a menace to the existence of righteousness. This character comes out in numerous hymns. Guru Arjan, for example, refers to God as ‘mighty to succour.’ Guru Nanak, in an exalted vision, refers to the destruction of evil and tyranny in age after age. Thus runs one such hymn.

The beloved Lord created Kṛishṇa in the form of the child-hero and gave him the strength to drag by the hair the tyrants Kaṁsa and Chandur ; He is the true Might, destroyer of the power of intoxicated brutes.  
The Lord who made the universe, has kept all  
its affairs in His own power ;  
The universe is on His leash ; He drags it  
whithersoever He pleases ;  
The proud tyrant shall inevitably be destroyed ;  
while the saint meditating on him shall be merged  
in Him.

(p. 606)

In another hymn on a similar theme, Guru Nanak enumerates the tyrants of mythology and legend such as the arrogant Ravana destroyed by Rāma, Madhu-Kaitabha, Mahishāsurā and Raktavīja destroyed by Durgā, Harnakash torn to pieces with the claws by the



*Lord as the Lion Man ; Jarāsandha destroyed by Kṛishṇa and such others.*<sup>9</sup> In other words of Guru Arjan elsewhere, God ‘destroys and uproots arrogant tyrants.’ ‘Any one contemplating aggression on the meek and the poor, shall by the Lord be consumed in the fire of His wrath.’<sup>10</sup>

Such hymns, to reiterate a point made before, but which will bear repetition, express faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness, as against the facile belief encouraged by the mythological tales prevalent in India, inculcating the belief in the miraculous intervention of the Lord whenever the innocent and the saintly are facing oppression. The form that the faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness has taken in Sikhism is to view such triumph as the consequence of the fearless and heroic struggle of the godly against the tyranny of the ungodly. In the rendering of the mythological tales of the epic fights between the forces of the gods and the demons by Guru Gobind Singh and the poets at his court, the see-saw of battle is described in detail and with great gusto—the demons all but winning, but ultimately worsted against Durgā or Rāma or Kṛishṇa, as the contending deity may be. There is nowhere a hint of the easy, miraculous victory of the popular imagination. The struggle is terrible, full of travail and is the fruit not only of purity and righteousness but of supreme heroism. In this feature is implicit the whole lesson which Sikhism was to inculcate, the true character of heroism both as a dedication and a course of self-invited suffering and travail in the pursuit of the ideal, which is to rid the world of evil and tyranny.

There are anticipations of such heroism in the compositions of the Gurus who preceded Guru Gobind Singh, and of some of the saints whose hymns were approved by Guru Arjan for inclusion in the Holy Granth. Says Guru Nanak while enunciating the hard path which the man of God must tread, the path of self-dedication and sacrifice, ‘shouldst thou cherish the desire to participate in the play of true love, place thy head on the palm of thy hand : then alone

9. P. 224.

10. P. 199.

must thou enter this quarter ; Shouldst thou put thy foot forward on this path, hasitate not to give up thy head.' (Page 1412)

The man of God is defined as one who can 'bear the unbearable.' His steadfastness in the face of the temptations of the world and his endurance in suffering must almost be superhuman. Bhai Gurdas, the earliest of the chroniclers of the Gurus, has characterised the House of Guru Ramdas, from which were descended all the subsequent Gurus, as marked for its capacity above all 'to bear the unbearable.' This was in part a prophecy of the martyrdom, heroic suffering and righteous endeavour of the successive occupants of the throne of Guruship.

Guru Nanak has reprimanded the Kshatriyas<sup>11</sup> of his day, proud of their martial descent and their role as heroes, of making abject surrender to the ruling muslim clans, whose language, ways and customs they adopted to curry favour with them. While Guru Nanak did not lead an armed crusade himself, his word continued to be the seed from which sprang the later heroic history of Sikh resistance to the tyranny unleashed by Aurangzeb and his successors.

The saintly Kabir in words which continue to this day to inspire the Sikhs with the zeal and fervour of holy and patriotic war, has made what sounds like a clarion call to heroic endeavour. His call also makes true heroism inherent in chivalry towards the poor and the humble :

"Thy sky-resounding kettle-drum (of spiritual inspiration) is struck and the heart is pierced with the true passion (for righteousness) ;  
The hero is engaged in battle ; now is the time to fight unto the last ;  
He alone is the hero who fights to defend the humble and the helpless ;  
Who even though hacked from limb to limb, will not flee the field."<sup>12</sup>

(Page 1105)

11. P. 663.

12. Sikh history furnishes examples of thousands of martyrs, who in the spirit of the teachings of their religion underwent the most inhuman tortures  
(contd.)

This pervasive theme of heroic endeavour and travail and sacrifice takes on the aspect of joy in heroic campaigning in the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh, who grasped the sword to fight oppression in the field. In words which ring with the sound of fearless heroism and leave the heart deeply imbued with the spirit of dedication and devotion to an idealism demanding the supreme sacrifice, he has defined the role and character of the true hero. In quartains, in the measure called *swaiya*, the attribute of God as the cherisher of the righteous and the foe of tyrants is repeatedly expressed with the emphasis and conviction born of undying faith. Below are quoted single lines or groups of lines from these compositions :

1. 'He cherishes the humble, protects the righteous and destroys evil-doers.' (*Akal Ustat*)
2. 'He consumes into flame suffering and evil, and crushes the hordes of the wicked in an instant.' (*Akal Ustat*)
3. 'Millions of demons such as Śumbha, Niśumbha, has He destroyed in an instant ;'  
'Dhūmra-Lochana, Chanda, Munda and Mahishasura has He defeated in a moment ;'  
'Demons like Chamara, Raṇa-Chichhura, Raktāchhanna has He slaughtered at a stroke.  
'With such a Master to protect him, why need this servant fear anything ?' (*Vichitra Nāṭak*)

without flinching. There is then, the story of Baba Ajit Singh, Guru Gobind Singh's eldest son, who with a body of Sikhs rescued a Brahmin woman from a petty Muslim dignitary and restored her to her family. There is a similar incident in the life of the great warrior Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, who rescued Hindu women from the aggressive Nawab of Kasur, when a supplication was laid before the Khalsa (The Sikh people) at the *Akal Takht* or Eternal Throne of the Guru for extricating them. Again, Mehtab Singh, hiding in the sand dunes of far-off Bikaner, when he heard of the desecration of the Hari Mandir (Golden Temple) by a Muslim commander, called in a Sikh, Massa Ranghar, who vowed that he would cut off the head of the defiler. He made the arduous journey to Amritsar, and braving infinite dangers pounced upon the petty tyrant, cut off his head while he was doing horrible sacrilege at the holy spot by drinking and witnessing a performance by girls in company.

In the spirit of deep humility, the hero-saint seeks the protection and mercy of the Lord :

‘Exalt me into the Mountain Sumeru from a straw :  
in cherishing the numble  
Art Thou unparalleled ;’  
‘Forgive my errors O Lord, I that am compact all  
of errors ;’  
‘Those who serve thee, their homes Thou fillest to  
overflowing with wealth.’  
‘In this Iron Age in the mighty arms of the  
Wielder of the Sword of Eternity alone is my trust.’  
(*Vichitra Nātak*)

Guru Gobind Singh has in numerous places expressed the ideal of the crusader in the path of God-yearning to attain the qualities which go to perfect such a character.

At the end of the rendering of the epic of Kṛishṇa in which contrary to the usual presentation of this God as immersed in dalliance in the idyllic surroundings of Braj, his heroic aspect has been emphasized, the ideal heroic character is thus enunciated in verse which acquires sublimity in its flow :

‘Praised be he whose tongue is over uttering  
the name of the Lord, and who is constantly  
contemplating holy war ;’  
‘This body shall one day turn to dust, but sailing  
in the ship of noble endeavour, his fame shall carry  
him across the ocean of this world ;’  
‘Abiding in the house of spiritual poise, he shall  
make his wisdom shine forth like a lamp,’  
‘And grasping firmly the broom of divine wisdom he  
shall sweep away the filth of cowardice.’

Towards the close of the stirring epic narrative of the war of Durgā, representing the avenging aspect of the Godhead against evil and unrighteousness, the heroic character is defined in words which thrill with their undying idealism :

‘Grant me this boon, O Lord : May I never turn  
away from righteous action ;  
May I never know fear as I engage in battle with  
the foe, and resolve firmly to win ;

May I ever instruct myself in the passion to  
utter Thy praises ;  
And at the last when the hour of destiny arrives,  
may it be granted me to lay down my life fighting  
on the field of battle.'

With such ideals before him, the man of God is exhorted to fight on in the way of the Lord, in the faith that He will ultimately succour those who tread His path :

'Against sickness and sorrow, from the dangers  
of land and water He gives protection in numerous  
ways :  
May the foes attacks be never so numerous, not one of  
these shall even graze His Servant.' (*Akal Ustat*)

'Whosoever is protected by the friend, what can the  
foe accomplish against him ?  
Not even his shadow will be touched ; all the  
efforts of his brutish foes shall go in vain.' (*Vichitra Nāṭak*)

Such has been the course of the eventful history of the Sikhs, in which faith, humility, the heroic spirit and the ideal of service and sacrifice ultimately turned a peace-loving sect into a dedicated army of heroes, who fearlessly fought the mighty Mughal empire for near about a century. In their subsequent history they have shown courage and endurance in situations of heavy crises, which has elicited high praise even from their opponents. This continuing strength of character is undoubtedly a result of the powerful impulse of idealism and heroism which issuing from Guru Nanak, has ever kept their vision fixed on the role which they feel history has thrown on them, as liberators and heroes. This consciousness is embedded in the humblest and the least educated among the Sikhs, who imbibe the exhortation to what in popular parlance is known as *dharmayudha* or 'righteous war' along with their daily prayer and their community life.

## CASTE IN A SIKH VILLAGE

**Indera Paul Singh**

SIKHISM does not recognize the superiority or inferiority of castes. It was one of the many reform movements in the 15th century, during the period of Muslim domination in India. These aimed at preventing the masses from being converted to Islam which was getting a large number of converts from the lower Hindu castes. To achieve this, the leaders of these reform movements attacked the extreme rigidity of Brahminism and advocated abolition of caste and removal of some of the restrictions. The radical element of this movement broke away from the Hindu orthodoxy. The founder of this wing of the movement was Basava, a Brahmin. He gave up the caste-polity and permitted marriages even between the Brahmins and Chandals.

Nanak (1469-1539 A. D.), the founder of Sikhism, and a Khatri by caste, preached in North India the equality of all men irrespective of their caste. He declared that distinctions based on caste and pedigree are vain and that no caste is acknowledged in the next world. "God will not ask man of his birth, He will ask him what has he done," says Nanak in *Ādi Granth*, Prabhat Rag. He further stated :

"Of the impure among the noblest  
Heed not the injunction;  
Of one pure among the most despised  
Nanak will become the foot-stool."

He also declared that by remembering Him, all, whether Kshatriya, Brahmin, Sudra or Vaisya can attain salvation (*Ādi Granth*, Malhar Rag). The Guru who succeeded him also preached the equality of castes. The third Guru, Amar Das has said about caste in the *Ādi Granth* :

“All say that there are four races,  
 But all are of the seed of Brahma  
 The world is but clay,  
 And of similar clay many pots are made,  
 Nanak says man will be judged by his actions,  
 And that without finding God there will be no salvation.  
 The body of man is composed of the five elements,  
 Who can say that one is high and another low?”

—*Bhairav Rag.*

The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh also says in the conduct of rules for the Khalsa that he will make all the four races of one colour.

“I will make the four races of one colour,  
 I will cause them to remember the words, ‘Wah Guru’ ”

And he took practical steps to make them look alike by ordaining them to keep five symbols, uncut hair, comb, iron bangle, short drawers, and a sword. The Five Beloved, whom he had chosen from an assembly of thousands of Sikhs gathered at Anandpur to celebrate the Vaisakhi festival, were drawn from different castes, except one Khatri all the others belonged to Jat and other Sudra castes.

When these Five were initiated into the new fraternity of the Khalsa (the pure), he made them drink *amrit* (nectar) from the same bowl and eat *prashad* from the same plate. He was himself initiated by these Five Beloved and, following him, many thousands of Sikhs present, irrespective of their caste, were thus initiated by the Five Beloved, drinking from the same bowl and eating from the same plate. This practice of eating from the same plate and drinking from the same bowl is followed even now at the time of initiation of a Sikh, the ceremony being known as *Amrit Chakhna*, drinking the nectar. All those thus initiated take on the name ‘Singh’. They are declared as sons of Guru Gobind Singh and his consort Mata Sahib Kaur. Their birth-place becomes Anandpur (where *Khalsa* was first initiated) and their caste becomes Sodhi Khatri, the same as that of Guru Gobind Singh. He declared that caste was an after growth in the Hindu Social System, and that nobody could call himself a

true Sikh unless he gave up the prejudice of caste. He said that the four castes were like *pan* (betal leaf), *supari* (betal nut), *chuna* (lime), *katha* (catchen), none of which alone was able to give relish to the tongue or strength to the teeth. He not only tried to make one caste out of four but removed all unevenness of religious privileges. In the Khalsa brotherhood the lowest was equal to the highest.

Another practical step that the Gurus took to abolish caste distinctions was the institution of *langer* (free kitchen). Each Sikh temple has a *langer* attached to it, which was initiated by the third Guru, Amar Das (1469-1574). He refused to meet any person who had not eaten in his kitchen, where people irrespective of their caste, status or rank, ate together. Even Emperor Akbar was not given an audience by the Guru until he had eaten in the kitchen attached to the Guru's home. Other successive gurus promoted this practice of inter-drinking and continued to emphasize the futility of being proud of one's caste, declaring that only the actions of the individual in this world would decide for or against his or her salvation.

As we have noted Guru Gobind Singh made a strong onslaught on caste distinctions and tried to create a classless, casteless Khalsa brotherhood. He embraced all those who came to join the new brotherhood. Many orthodox high-caste followers of him disapproved of his ideas and left him, but he continued to accept men from low castes. He declared the low-caste converts as his own sons, '*Rangrete Guru ke bete*'. It may also be mentioned that the bulk of soldiers in the Sikh army were from the low castes.

The holy book of the Sikhs, the *Ādi Granth*, which succeeded the tenth guru as the guru of the Sikhs, contain writings not only of the Sikh gurus, but also of the Hindu and Muslim *bhagats* (saints) belonging to various castes : tailor—Namdev, butcher—Sadhan, vaisya—Trilochan, barbar—Sain, jat—Dhanna, brahmins—Gita Govind and Surdas, weaver—Kabir, cobbler—Ravidas, sufis—Sheikh Farid and Bhikan.



Sikh religion tried to establish a casteless society and took into its fold persons belonging to various castes giving them equal status. This certainly kept most of the high caste Brahmins and Khatris away from the Sikh religion. It is historically true that the Sikh gurus advocated the equality of castes, and even now the villagers of Daleke<sup>1</sup> and Sikhs in general point to this as one of the superior qualities of their faith. The social relations of various castes in Daleke are, therefore, worth noting. It would be pertinent to note in what manner caste in a Sikh village differs from that of a Hindu village.

## II

### CASTE HIERARCHY

The people belonging to various castes professing Sikhism may be divided broadly into two groups: the *Sardar* (the upper castes), and the *Mazhbis* (the scavengers). The first group includes the agriculturists as well as the artisans, e.g., jats, kambohs, tarkhans, sunars, cheemba and nais. These caste groups can be indentified in the same manner as in a Hindu village and the membership of each caste is confined only to members born into it. The Sardars can be sub-divided into two groups—agriculturists and traders. Since the predominant number of Sikhs are agriculturist Jats, they consider themselves to be superior to traders and other castes. Most of the Sikh values are Jat values and the Jats assert that they occupy the highest position among the Sikh castes. Their claim is strengthened by the fact that they are the masters of the land, and some of them even belong to the ex-ruling families of Punjab. Ownership of land is definitely a major criterion for determining the status of various people

Daleke is a small village situated at a distance of five miles from Taran Taran in the Amritsar District of the Majha area of the Punjab. This area is known as the cradle of Sikhism and most of the population profess Sikh faith. Those living in Daleke belong to Brahmin, Jat, Kamboh, Kumhar, Tarkhan, Cheemba, Nai, Mazhbi and Sansi castes. Jat are the dominant caste—both numerically and economically. For full description of the village, its caste component and its economic structure, see Indera P. Singh, *A Sikh Village in Traditional India*, Illinois, Philadelphia, 1959. For religious structure, see Indera P. Singh, *Religion in Daleke 'A Sikh Village,' Aspects of Religion in Indian Society*.

in Indian villages and it becomes more important in Sikh villages as most of its adherents are agriculturists, who at one time were warriors and conquered large tracts of land.

That those indulging in trade are considered lower than the agriculturists is further evidenced by the status accorded to Brahmins, Khattris and Kambohs. There is no Khatri family in the village, but a hypothetical question was put as to their position in the caste hierarchy. It was stated that they will not rank higher because of their birth, but since they earned their living by trade they will be considered lower in status. But if a Khatri family possesses a large tract of land, its members will be regarded of equal status. One of the reasons cited for not giving a higher rank to the Brahmins was that they now were no longer priests, but engaged themselves in trade. The same reason was given for putting Kambohs who are also agriculturists lower in rank to the Jats. Some Kambohs have opened grocery shops, something which Jat will never do. The Kambohs, however, asserted for themselves a higher rank than the Jats on account of the prevalence of hypergamy among the Jats. An incident of the promotion of a Kamboh army Havildar to a Lieutenant was related by the Kamboh informants to support their claim. The Jat officers resented this promotion and protested to the Commanding Officer that since Kambohs belonged to a lower caste group, they should not be commissioned like the Jats. The British Commanding Officer called Mirasis of both the castes and asked them to tell truthfully about their ancestors. The Mirasis of the Kambohs narrated the legend of the descent of Kamboh from Raja Kamboj of Kambohia and asserted that there had been no case of Kambohs marrying anybody outside their caste. On the other hand the Mirasi of the Jats told that the mother of the Jat ancestor was a Sansi and that they had been accepting wives from lower castes. Whatever the reason may be of the Kamboh claims of superiority or an equal status with the Jats, they are assigned a lower status than the Jats in the village. This may be due to their small number and small land holdings as well as the absence of any Jagirdars amongst them. Next to the agriculturist castes come the artisan castes; and all of them are given an equal status. Among them, the Tarkhans and Kumhars can be said to occupy a slightly higher status because

of their better economic position. Nais, Sunar and Cheemba occupy almost the same status in the village society; Sansi and Chamar are considered lower in hierarchy than the Mazhbis but the other villagers group them with the Mazhbis. Those Mazhbis who have embraced Christianity occupy the same status as that of other Mazhbi. Some of them have become barbers to make their living and raise their social status.

Caste hierarchy in a Sikh village may be depicted as following :

Jagirdars		Brahmins
Jats : Zamindars	Agriculturists	(Shop-keepers)
Kamboh		
	Artisans	
Kumhars (Traders)		Tarkhans (Carpenters)
Mehre (Water-carrier)	Nai (Barber)	Sunar (Gold smith)
Cheemba (Washerman)		
	Mazhbi	
	Chamar—Ramdasia	
	Sansi	

#### “ INTERCASTE MARRIAGE

All the castes are strictly endogamous units and no marriages are allowed outside the caste. The Jats marry among Jats, while Kambohs, Tarkhans and others also seek spouses from their own caste. Inter-caste marriage should be an important test of abolition of caste system, but in Daleke no single case of inter-marriage has occurred in its history. Only a few such marriages have been reported during the times of the Sikh gurus and the Sikh rule. Bhai Santok Singh and Giani Ditt Singh (of Singh Sabha Movement), two great Sikh scholars married outside their caste. There are instances related of a poor but devoted Sikh being accepted as a son-in-law by a rich man but this always happened within the caste. An important marriage of this kind was that of the fourth guru, Ram Dass to the daughter of the third guru, Amar

Dass. Ram Dass known as Jetha before ascending to guruship was an orphan and used to make his living by selling boiled gram. But he was a Khatri like his father-in-law. Some of the Sikh scholars insist that the gurus never advocated inter-caste marriage, although they stressed the equality of caste and took steps to remove disabilities and inequalities among them. However, some of them assert that the very fact that the tenth guru, Gobind Singh created one caste of Khalsa implied that no restriction be laid on inter-caste marriages. Once a preacher came to the village gurudwara and profoundly advocated the abolition of caste distinctions favouring inter-caste marriages. One of the Mazhbis listening to him got up and requested the speaker to solve the problem of finding husbands for his four daughters. The speaker asked those wishing to accept the Mazhbi's daughters in marriage to raise their hands. Practically everybody in the audience, consisting of all castes, raised his hand. Apparently being satisfied with the result, the Mazhbi asked for girls to marry his sons. This time no hand went up. People were ready to accept wives from lower caste but were not willing to give their daughters in marriage.

This may not be due to any belief in Sikh practices, but to the custom of hypergamy prevalent among the Jats. There is a great shortage of women in Daleke as well as in the whole of Punjab in comparison to men. Many men remain unmarried throughout their life. It is quite difficult for poor farmers to get married while even a blind or a lame woman would have no difficulty of finding a husband. Many people bring wives from outside of any caste when they cannot get any through regular means. There are 15 such women in the village whose caste is not known (they are apparently from lower castes). These women are accepted as equals, and their children have the same status as children of a woman of known caste. However, such marriages are never allowed to be performed as regular marriages with all the ceremonies symbolizing the essentials of a marriage as conceived by the village community.

The custom of hypergamy is also reflected in the indulgence of illicit relations between the higher-caste and the Mazhbi. While such relations will not be tolerated within the caste and would

provoke murders and fights, illicit relation between Jat male and a Mazhbi female are tolerated. That their relations are quite common is evident by a remark of an agriculture inspector in the village. When asked by a group of young men, why Mazhbi women were so beautiful, he remarked jocularly, "This is due to hybrid vigour. The union of higher caste Jats with low-caste Mazhbis produce beautiful women." But illicit relations are not given the sanctity of marriage and children if born are not recognised and are called Mazhbi. They do not improve their caste or status in any manner.

On the other hand some cases of inter-marriages of the Jats irrespective of their religion, Hindu or Sikh were reported from Ambala district, where they live side by side. It can be said that in case of marriage, caste is a more important factor than religion. A number of cases of inter-religious but inter-caste marriages can be cited. Inter-marriage among Christian, Hindu and Sikh Mazhbis is commonly practised, the bride adopting the religion of her husband. It must be mentioned that there is a tendency now-a-days to seek spouses within their own religion; and there were no cases of inter-religious marriages in Daleke, possibly because the area is predominantly Sikh.

The solitary case of inter-religious marriage, in which the whole village participated was that of a Jat with a Muslim woman of another village. (Village exogamy was adhered to even in this case.) But this marriage was performed after the woman had been converted to Sikhism. Her son married into a Jat family on attaining adulthood.

Summing up, we can say that the conversion of the villagers to Sikhism has not resulted in any inter-caste marriage except hypergamous marriages allowed by the customary law and practice.

#### **INTER-DINING, SOCIAL INTERCOURSE AND POLLENTION**

Huston suggests that taboo on marriage is the necessary and inevitable outcome of the taboo in food and drink rather than the cause of it. Inter-dining and social intercourse is controlled by certain regulations in the Hindu caste. Some can eat with others while others cannot.

In Daleke, the agriculturist Jats, Kambohs and Artisan castes like Tarkhans, Kumhars, Sunars, and Nais are considered higher-caste Sikhs. These castes visit each other's houses, inter-dine and attend marriage functions and other festive occasions. They go to the fairs together, and celebrate most of the festivals together. They live also in adjoining houses, although those belonging to one caste tend to live near each other. There is also no feeling of pollution attached to their touch, person or clothing. The agriculturists, traders and artisan castes among the Sikhs have an equivalent social status; but this cannot be said about the social relation between the Mazhbi and other Sikhs. Their houses are on one end of the village, and a long wall separates them from the others in the village. About twenty families live in a hamlet a hundred yards away from the village. Land for building houses was given to his farm workers by the father of the Sarpanch on the birth of his first son (present Sarpanch). The Mazhbis had requested him for a grant of land because their area of habitation in the village had become overcrowded.

Mazhbis work as farm labour, while their women clean the courtyards, collect cattle-dung and make dung-cakes. The work of both Mazhbi men and women necessitate their entering into the houses of the Sardars for whom they work. More than half of the farmers who employ them allow them house entry and some even let them milk their buffaloes. Such persons are not afraid of pollution by touch. But a few Sikhs still would clean their clothes with soap if touched by the Mazhbi. One of them was known to even take a bath to purify himself. Most of those not allowing Mazhbis to enter their houses are Kambohs and Kumhars. They relate an interesting legend to support their action. They say that when the Five Beloved were entering the tent of Guru Gobind Singh on his invitation, the Mazhbi among them asked Guru's permission to enter his tent. The Guru told him that he need not have asked and since he had done so, Mazhbis would have to wait for three hundred years until they had full access to all places. This legend is not supported by any historical facts and seem to have been invented by some clever and interested persons. It is very similar to the other common legend of Balmiki, the Guru of Chuhras (sweepers). Converts to Sikhism faith from this group are called Mazhbi, who

happened to arrive late at a party given by Lord Krishna, and had to eat only the left-overs. But the feeling of pollution has been decreasing in intensity after partition and the declaration of untouchability as a legal offence.

Separate wells for various castes have been characteristic of Hindu villages, and even in Daleke we find a separate well for the Mazhbis while all other castes draw water from another well. Two years ago, the Sarpanch persuaded the villagers to allow Mazhbis to draw water from the model well built in the centre of the village. But the Mazhbis have made use of the common well only occasionally, because many older men of the village do not like them to draw water from the same well as themselves. Twice we heard an old Jat shouting at a Mazhbi to go away, who was standing near the well. However, the Mazhbi children studying in the school make free use of the common well, which is located next to their school. Recently one of the progressive Jats has employed a Mazhbi boy to clean his utensils and serve food. Although no other family has followed his example, nobody in the village has refused to eat at the house of the Jat because he has a Mazhbi domestic servant.

Mazhbis accompany marriage parties only of persons for whom they work. Mostly marriage parties are confined to the relatives and friends who obviously belong to the same caste.

However, in the feasts given in the village all are invited, but Mazhbis sit separately from other castes. The Sardars may come to the house of a Mazhbi on festive occasions, but they do it as a benevolent gesture to their farm labour, who feel greatly honoured by such visits. Persons belonging to other castes who participate in each other's festive occasions are mostly personal friends of the family. But no discrimination is practised against persons because of their caste in a marriage party.

All persons irrespective of their castes go to attend fairs together and in these fairs no special food shops are erected for the use of Mazhbis. Until about fifteen years ago Mazhbis were not given food in the same utensils as others. Separate glasses and plates

were kept in a corner which the Mazhbi had to clean himself after using them. Today the Mazhbi drink and eat from the same utensils at the Sikh confectioner's shops in the nearby town, Taran Taran, as are used by others. That is why orthodox Hindus sometimes do not buy eatables from a Sikh Confectioner's Shop.

The Mazhbis are traditional brewers of country liquor. Whenever a villager needs liquor (which he does quite often) he gives some 'gur' (brown-sugar) to his Mazhbi, who gives him the distilled liquor and keeps a part of it for himself. Mazhbis and Sardars often drink liquor together at the fairs and occasionally in the fields. We saw them drinking from the same glass which was passed from one to the other. However, in their homes they usually drink only among their own caste members. On festivals like Lohri and Holi, when villagers indulge in heavy drinking, no caste distinctions are observed. In fact those preaching equality of caste today refer convincingly to the fact that all the liquor drunk by the Sardars is brewed by the hands of the Mazhbi, whom they would not like to touch otherwise. They argue, 'if you can remain clean after drinking gallons of liquor prepared by a Mazhbi, how can you be polluted by his touch ?'

#### THE VILLAGE TEMPLE AND THE PRIEST

The village temple 'gurudwara' is also used as a *Janjghar*, a place where the bridegroom's party stays for 3-4 days when they come to the bride's place for marriage. Since village exogamy is the rule, the gurudwara is always in demand. All castes except the Mazhbis are allowed to stay in the gurudwara. Until recently (5 years ago) they had a small room of their own for this purpose in their part of the village. No *Granth* (the Sikh holy book) had been installed there, and when not in use for marriage parties, it was used as a common room where Mazhbis used to gather, smoke and gossip. This room was later washed away in the floods, and has not since been rebuilt. However, they have recently collected logs of wood for the roof of the room. Mazhbis have been allowed to put up their marriage parties in the gurudwara only twice during the last ten years. The reason given by others for not allowing the Mazhbi



marriage parties to stay in gurudwara is that the Mazhbis smoke tobacco (which is prohibited in Sikhism) and thus desecrate the sanctity of the gurudwara. The Mazhbi parties which were allowed to stay in the village gurudwara are reported to have been clean (people who did not smoke). In fact, they were the guests of the well-to-do Mazhbi families who earn their livelihood by serving in the Indian Army.

Sikhism declared caste differences against its precepts, and the Sikh gurus took certain practical steps to bring social equality in various castes, therefore, it would be pertinent to note inter-caste relations in the religious affairs of the Sikhs. There is a common gurudwara (Sikh temple) in the village where persons belonging to all the castes worship. The offerings of *prashad* and grain are accepted from persons irrespective of their caste and the same are also distributed among all. The Jats, Kambohs, Tarkhan, Mazhbi and others assemble and sit there inter-mixed. Those high caste Sikhs, especially women, who do not allow Mazhbis to enter their houses beyond their cattle-yard, usually sit away from the place where Mazhbis are sitting. Food is distributed free on *Masya* of every month, birth anniversaries of Guru Nanak and Gobind Singh and other festive occasions in the gurudwara after the religious ceremonies are over. No caste distinction is maintained while serving food and all sit together on the floor. All villagers have access to *Granth*—the Holy Book and the granthi, Sikh priest.

Another important factor reflecting on the social relations within the caste structure is the role of the priest. In a Hindu village a low caste man cannot become priest in a temple, which is the privilege only of Brahmins. The Brahmin priests serve only the higher castes, and do not perform any ceremonies of persons belonging to other castes. But in Daleke the person who looks after the village gurudwara is a Cheemba (washerman) by caste. He is usually addressed as *Sant* (saint). He serves persons belonging to all castes equally. He performs all Sikh marriages in Daleke irrespective of any caste distinction. At births and deaths he prays for all. He conducts marriages of all the castes. He collects bread and flour every day from each house, some of which he eats himself, the rest

being distributed among the travellers staying in the gurudwara. The poor people of the village also gather near the gurudwara to get some food from the *Sant*. The food is collected from the houses of all castes and distributed among persons belonging to all castes.

Often the *Sant* is called upon to perform *Akhand Pāth*, the continuous reading of the *Granth* in its entirety in 48 hours; or *Sādhāran Pāth* reading of entire *Granth* in a week or at leisure, in the houses of different people. The *Pāths* are conducted by people on occasions of marriages, deaths and births in the family or on the expiation of vow. The *Sant* naturally cannot read the whole *Granth* (1430 pages) alone in case of *Ākhand* and *saptāhik pāths* which have to be completed in a specific period of time. He invites three or four others who can also read the *Granth* to assist him. His main assistant is a Mazhbi, whom he has trained himself. He taught him Punjabi and reading the *Granth* as well as the performance of other religious ceremonies. Another is a Tarkhan (carpenter), and the third is a Jat. Some of the Jagirdars and women who can also read the *Granth* take their turns in the conduct of completing these *pāths*. All the *pāthis* take their meals at the house where an *Ākhand Pāth* is being conducted. All of them, irrespective of their caste, are fed by the host families. Many such occasions were noted during our stay. On the completion of the *pāth* usually all relatives and friends get together and sing hymns. The rules of untouchability are a little bit relaxed on these occasions. The Mazhbis may also come and sit with others in the religious congregation, especially in the houses of such Jats who allow their Mazhbis to enter their homes.

*Kirtan* (singing of hymns) usually follows the end of the reading of the *Granth* or is organized on festivals celebrated in the gurudwara. The traditional singers of Sikh hymns until the period of the 10th Guru were *masands*. They became corrupt and started demanding huge sums as their share of the offerings on various Sikh festivals. The tenth guru dismissed them and enjoined upon his Sikhs to sing hymns themselves. In Daleke, there are four persons who usually sing hymns on these occasions, one of them is the *Sant*, who also plays on the harmonium. One of the Tarkhans is a famous *Dhadhi*, Punjab's traditional Sikh bards and plays on a 'Sarangi'. Another

is a Mehra. A Jat and a Mazhbi play on drums. These singers are often joined by the whole congregation in singing hymns. In fact, some hymns sung near the end of the meeting are to be sung in unison only. Young boys and girls are also encouraged to sing hymns, or recite poems on festive occasions, when they are given some prizes for doing so.

Mostly prayers are led by the *Sant* in the gurudwara or the house, but usually an elderly person, who knows to read the *Granth*, is asked to sit near it. He reads the order of the day from it at the end of the meeting.

Although on Sikh festivals and in Sikh temples food is prepared in one kitchen and served to everybody, on occasions of anniversaries of some of the Muslim *pirs* like Sher Shah, separate kitchens are maintained for the Mazhbi and other Sikhs. Before partition two separate kitchens were run for Muslims and Sikhs respectively.

Independence has brought with it the laws banning untouchability, and the modern preachers of equality of castes like the Sarpanch and his young friends point it out that what the new law demands is just what the gurus had preached. It is in keeping with the precepts of the Sikh religion. There lies the major differences of caste structure between a Sikh and a Hindu village. While in a Hindu village caste hierarchy and differences have religious sanctions behind them, there are no such sanctions in the Sikh religion. Thus it becomes easier to propagate and instil equality of caste-relations in a Sikh village. Moreover, in Sikh temples caste distinctions have not played any role. They may not eat or sit together in their houses, but in the gurudwara all sit and dine together.

Another significant factor is the dichotomy of various castes in a Sikh village in comparison to a number of hierarchical castes in a Hindu village. The assimilation of Jat, Khatri, Kamboh and artisan castes like Tarkhans and Kumhars into one group is almost complete so far inter-dining and inter-social relations are concerned. Although the agriculturist Jats claim themselves to be higher than shopkeeper Kumhars and Khatri and artisan Tarkhans, no restrictions are

put on their social relations. Nevertheless no inter-marriages among these castes are allowed.

The Majha has produced a number of daring dacoits and they belong to various castes. In the Mukerian dacoity the four dacoits who belonged to this area came from Jat, Sunar and Mazhbi castes. The dacoits do not retain any caste distinctions.

### IMPROVING THE STATUS

Now there naturally comes the question whether the Mazhbi can improve their status in the caste hierarchy. Besides becoming a *granthi*, priest (when he becomes a holy man), a Mazhbi can raise his status if he is a good wrestler or a good singer. That makes him hero of the village and persons belonging to higher castes would not hesitate to inter-dine with him or invite him to their homes. Service in the army or in the government also helps one to raise his status. Accumulation of wealth and political power adds great stimulus to one's efforts of raising his status. Being a staunch Sikh is also potent factor in improving one's status, i.e., one does not trim his beard, cut his hair, abstains from smoking and says his prayers regularly.

All these factors mainly help a person in improving his status in his caste alone. But if a rich Mazhbi leaves his village and settles in a far away village or town, he is easily accepted as a person of equal status. Usually he styles himself there as a Jat, and since many *gots* of the Mazhbi and Jats are common, this kind of confusion can easily be created. But if his neighbours in his near village come to know of his real caste, he is bound to leave the village. Even in the British army there were separate regiments of the higher caste Sikhs (the Sikhs) and Mazhbi (Sikh Pioneers, now known as Sikh Light Infantry) Mazhbis working in industrial towns like Tatanagar and where dams are being built, Hirakund etc. do not face any discrimination and are all addressed as Sardar. If a Mazhbi and a Jat coming from the same village to work in a far off place, they do not practice untouchability, but as soon as they arrive in their native village they become conscious of it.

The various caste units in the Armed Services have now been mixed and no untouchability is allowed to be practised. But still a certain preference for various services can be noticed—most of the Jats and Mazhbis are in the army. Mazhbi being mainly in Supply and Sappers and Miners. The Khattris and artisan castes predominate in the Engineering, Signals and Air Force. Nevertheless, the equal status enjoyed by all soldiers in the Armed Forces has a healthy effect on the villagers; and helps in removing untouchability.

### DECLINE OF BRAHMINS

Let us describe the relationship of the Brahmins with other castes in the village and the reason of decline in their influence. Although they were not directly included in running of the village economy, they fulfilled a vital social and spiritual role. Especially births, marriages and deaths could not be performed without their help. But the need of Brahmins in Sikh villages and their role was resulting in making Sikhism a branch of Hindu protestants, owing allegiance to Hindu gods and goddesses. Even in the precincts of the premier Sikh temples, there were idols of Rama and other Hindu gods and deities. Ramlila used to be performed in the Golden Temple at Taran Taran. All this gave impetus to reform movements among the Sikhs in 1922-26, the Singh Sabha and Akali movements. These movements aimed at removing the Brahmanical influence from the Sikh temples and masses. This influence had slowly crept in since the attainment of Sikh kingdom by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and its fall. Another impetus to this reform movement was a reaction against the efforts of the Christian missionaries to bring Sikhs into their fold. The decline of Brahmins in the villages can be said to have started with the launching of these reform movements among the Sikhs.

An Anand Marriage Act was passed in the Central Assembly to regulate marriages performed according to Sikh rites. This made the services of Brahmins unnecessary. The Sikh marriage rites could now be conducted by a *granthi*—Sikh priest. He could be of any caste. The *granthi* of Daleke belongs to the Cheemba (washerman) caste. He was trained at the Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar

and now replaces the Brahmin in conducting the rites-de-passage. He gave all Sikh children at birth the baptism of sword, performed many ceremonies as well as fulfilled other spiritual needs of the people. The functions of a *granthi* can, moreover be performed by any Sikh who is conversant with the know-how of each ceremony. One of the Tarkhans and Jats often perform these ceremonies in Daleke in the absence of the *granthi*.

Another asset of the Brahmin was the knowledge of astrology and preparation of horoscopes. The Akali Movement discouraged belief in horoscopes and astrology and pointed out that such beliefs are against Sikh precepts and though there are still a few Sikhs in Daleke who will not till their land without asking for an auspicious day from the Brahmin, there are many who do so now without asking him. Consulting the Brahmin is considered an unnecessary expense which can be avoided without any danger of losing the crop. Only when a farmer has been unsuccessful in cultivation for two or three successive years does he take recourse to the Brahmin in order to find an auspicious day and avoid misfortune next time.

Another important function of the Brahmins was to perform rites in honour of ancestors of their *jajmans*, i.e., *shradhs*. The Brahmins were invited to feast in the farmers houses besides being given some gram for their services. The Sikh reform movements discouraged this practice too ; for to-day, a family still may celebrate *shradh*, but they do not feed the Brahmins or ask them to perform any ceremony in honour of their ancestors. Instead they just invite a few Sikhs, usually five, of any caste and feed them.

The Jats have been the least affected by Brahmins from times immemorial and during the 1920's the story of betrayal by a Brahmin cook of the tenth guru was revived to justify a break with the Brahmins. Gangu, the Brahmin cook, betrayed the two youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh and their grandmother and handed them over to the Muslim ruler of Sirhind, who had them put to death. Similarly another story attributing the defeat of the Sikhs at the hands of the British to the treachery of Brahmin generals of the Sikh army was circulated to strengthen the break with the Brahmins.

The Brahmins in Daleke were feeling these pressures and losing fast their custom as well as respect. The final break seems to have come with the conversion of a Muslim woman of another village to Sikhism and her marriage to a Jat of Daleke. The Brahmins protested that this was against the tenets of Hinduism and threatened that they would not have anything to do with the villagers if they allowed the conversion of a Muslim. The Sikhs were in no mood to pay heed to this threat and went ahead with the conversion in the presence of the entire village population. Since then the Brahmins of Daleke have ceased to play any vital role in the spiritual and social life of the people. The Daleke villagers gave another reason also for not showing any respect to the Brahmins. One of the Brahmin brothers began to drink wine and eat meat, like Jats and others in the village. They now run grocery shops, and sell medicines. They have lost their superior status and are now at the mercy of the villagers. When one of the Brahmin brothers who also practices medicine left the village for sometime, the villagers brought a Kamboh refugee compounder to open a shop in Daleke. When the Brahmin 'doctor' returned after a year to revive his business he found that many of his customers were already patronising the new doctor.

Predominance among the Sikhs of Jats whose hatred against Brahmins seems to be traditional, has been another cause of the break-away from Brahmins. The Jats of the Hindi-speaking part of the Punjab, Delhi and U.P. also do not seem to have much respect for Brahmins either.

*This paper is based on fieldwork in Daleke from July, 1956 to March, 1957 and short visits during 1958, 1959 and 1960. Fieldwork was carried on with assistance of Ram Narain, M. G. Oswal, Darshan Singh and Balbir K. Singh, and was supported by a generous grant from Robert Redfield and Milton Singer of the University of Chicago. I am indebted to prof. P. C. Biswas, Head of the Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, for his valuable guidance and support. The assistance of G. S. Malhi, Block Development Officer, Taran Taran, in the selection of the village and making contacts is also gratefully acknowledged. I wish to express my grateful thanks to our various informants for their hospitality and patience.*

# ON BEING UNSHORN

J P. Singh Uberoi

## I

THE custom of wearing unshorn hair (*kes*) is among the most cherished and distinctive signs of an individual's membership of the Sikh Panth and it seems always to have been so. The explicit anti-depilatory injunction was early established as one of the four major taboos (*kuraht*) that are impressed upon the neophyte at the ceremony of initiation into Sikhism. Yet there exists hardly any systematic attempt in Sikh studies to explain and interpret the origin and significance of this custom.<sup>1</sup> As a religious system Sikhism is anti-ritualistic in doctrinal content and general tone, so that a study of the few obligatory rites and ceremonies that are associated with it, in its institutional or social aspect, should be of considerable interest for their own sake. Moreover, if our investigation of the connexion between the specific custom of being unshorn and Sikhism as a whole were to be made in a comparative and empirical spirit and according to rules of method capable of universal application, we may expect that the solution of this particular problem would also illumine certain general problems of the sociology of religion, for example, regarding the nature of initiation ceremonies and the meaning of symbols.

I am not myself able to adequately investigate the problem since I do not possess the necessary linguistic means of access to the original Punjabi sources and without enquiring into them at first hand one cannot proceed satisfactorily. The argument and interpretation presented in this paper will be based solely on the information available in English, and for my reliance on second hand sources that are incomplete and liable to error I owe an apology in advance. I

1. A noteworthy exception is S. Kapur Singh, *Parasharprasna. The Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh* (Jullundur : Hind Publishers, 1959), especially chs. 4, 5.



shall hope, nevertheless, that the sociological method or scheme of interpretation that I shall adopt might invoke your interest. For the results achieved, or capable of being achieved, in a line of enquiry depend not only on the evidence examined and its authenticity, but also on the method of analysis and interpretation followed.

The particular method adopted here implies that, for a proper theoretical understanding or explanation, the ceremonial custom or rite in question must be viewed from two interrelated aspects. We should attempt to determine (1) its ideological meaning within a particular system of symbolic thought, and (2) its social function within a particular social system of groups and categories. The first aspect, which we may call explanation at the level of culturally conditioned thought and belief, is a matter of examining the ceremony or rite as a condensed statement, the symbolic expression of characteristic cultural ideas and values. In the second aspect of our study we move to the level of institutionalized behaviour or social action and seek to relate the rite, and the social occasion of its performance, to the total social system of the group or category of persons who recognize the obligation to perform it. In neither case do we consider the particular rite in isolation but in the context of the other rites with which it is associated in reality and, at either level of analysis, our understanding proceeds by seeking to relate the part to its larger whole, the piece to the pattern. Only after these necessary steps have been accomplished in the context of a specific culture and society may we rightly proceed to compare the meanings and social functions of similar rites observed in two or more different cultures, or even of the same rite in a single culture at different historical periods.

Combining these two aspects or levels of thought and behaviour, which it is convenient to distinguish for analysis, we may state the central assumption of our procedure in the form that all ceremonies and rites are expressive and affirmative in character, that is, they embody abstract meanings and values in concrete shape. The obligatory and oft-repeated social performance of a body of rites serves to give definitive expression and form to a people's collective life and thought. It affirms the coherence of their particular pattern of culture and social organization as an ordered whole, and

contributes to maintain its continuity from generation to generation. These effects together constitute, according to our main theoretical assumption, the *raison d'être* of ritual behaviour and symbolic thought.

It is obvious to anyone who has made the attempt that an investigation of the exact meaning and social function of a rite is a complex and difficult task; it is a process like that of ascertaining the grammar and syntax of a language, which cannot be done by simple enquiry from a native speaker or informant. For ritual is capable by its inner nature of encapsulating several abstract meanings and social references and, moreover, these generally do not lie readily accessible at the conscious surface of life but require to be extracted, as it were, from the subconscious. This is why it is especially necessary in this field of study to avoid all easy inferences from intuition or deductive reasoning and to adhere to explicitly formulated rules of method.

## II

The cultural association of male hair, especially long hair, with magical or sacred ideas is known from many parts of the world. It is recognized in general terms to be a symbol of manliness, virility, honour, power, aggression, and so on. For example, in early Europe the Achaeans, who conquered Greece, customarily wore their hair long and wild. The Semitic story of Samson and Delilah, as told in the Old Testament, well illustrates the virtue of remaining unshorn. We can also locate many similar examples in classical Hinduism. The Institutes of Manu specify that: "Even should a man be in wrath, let him never seize another by the hair. When a Brahman commits an offence for which the members of other castes are liable to death, let his hair be shaved off as sufficient punishment."

We should, however, be careful to remember that, like all sacred or tabooed objects, long hair can also equally carry the opposite connotation. It can be regarded, especially when unkempt, as signifying something unclean, dangerous, or abandoned. We must thus refer, according to the rules of our method, to the actual context and

situation in order to determine which of these two elements is predominant in a particular case.

That the precise physical state of the hair is always relevant to its symbolic meaning, but is never itself the deciding factor, can be made clear from the example of the Chinese pigtail, which superficially resembles the Hindu *shikha* (scalp-lock) in appearance. The Manchus, a foreign dynasty, in fact first instituted the pigtail among the Chinese in 1644 A.D. as a sign of their subjection. It later became accepted as a characteristic Mandarin custom, even as a sign of honour. In the mid-nineteenth century the Taiping rebellion, and in the early twentieth century Sun Yat-sen's movement and others, sought to dispose of it, remembering its original significance. The Taipings did so by wearing all their head hair long and became known as the "long-haired rebels", whereas the twentieth century revolutionaries proceeded to cut all their hair short, literally throwing the pigtail away. The complete contrast between these two outcomes of a single impulse is not without interest for our study.

In Sikhism the injunction to remain unshorn is expressly associated with the ceremony of initiation, and it is in that context that we must primarily explain it. Now every initiation rite obviously possesses the nature of an investiture since through it some new status, with its consequent rights and obligations, is conferred symbolically upon the neophyte and he or she enters on a new mode of existence. But every initiation rite necessarily also contains a less obvious element, that of renunciation or divestiture, whereby the neophyte symbolically discards, or has taken away from him, attributes of his old status and mode of existence. One must ritually first abandon the previous course or phase of social existence in order to properly enter the new. Admittedly, the positive element of investiture or conferment generally predominates in initiation rites, but the element of renunciation or divestiture is always present to some degree. This negative element may even be uppermost in certain cases, for example, in initiation to monkhood.

I want now to draw attention to a class of initiation rites of this latter kind that were widely prevalent in the Punjab at the time

that Sikhism took its origin. These were rites of renunciation (*sannyas*) through which an individual obtained entrance to one or other of the medieval mendicant orders (Sanyasis, etc.). It is my contention that an examination of this class of rite with the details of the Sikh initiation rite borne in mind, shows a remarkable relation of structural inversion to exist between the two. I want to suggest that, in terms of the symbolic language and ritual idiom of the times, at least one cultural meaning of the Sikh initiation rite was that it stood as the antonym of the rites of Hindu renunciation.<sup>2</sup>

A Sanyasi is a person who, having passed through the first three statuses (*ashramas*) of Brahmanical Hinduism, renounces the world and is cared for by others. It may perhaps be that the Sanyasi religious orders were older than the Brahmanical institution of *sannyas*, the fourth and last stage of life. At any rate, the orders seem to have been open to entry by the individual person of almost any physical age. The Sanyasi orders had decayed significantly during the Buddhist period and then split into sub-orders with heterodox creeds. They were reformed by Shankar Acharya, whose four disciples instituted four *maths* (orders) that later developed into numerous *padas* (sub-orders). Each sub-order was said to have two sections, one celibate and mendicant, the other not. All Sanyasis were further graded according to four degrees of increasing sanctity (Kavichar, Bhodak, Hans, Param Hans).

The Sanyasi initiation rite was (and continues to be) essentially as follows. The candidate intending to attain renunciation having first gone on a pilgrimage to find a *guru*, who should be a Brahman, the latter satisfies himself as to his fitness and proceeds to initiate him. The neophyte commences with the *shradha* (obsequies) to his ancestors to fulfil his obligations to them. He next performs the sacrificial *baji hawan* and gives away whatever he possesses, severing all

2. The material presented on the succeeding pages is derived from *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (based on the Census Reports for the Punjab, 1883 and 1892), compiled by H. A. Rose, 3 vols. (Lahore : Samuel T. Weston at Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1911-1919).

This work is referred to hereinafter as *Punjab Tribes & Castes*.

connexion with the world. His beard, moustaches, and head are entirely shaved (*mundan*), retaining only the scalp-lock (*shikha*), and the sacred thread is put aside. He then performs the *atma-shradha* or own death rites. (An initiated Sanyasi is thus counted as socially deceased and, when he dies, is not cremated but buried in a sitting posture without ceremony.) The scalp-lock is now cut off and the neophyte enters the river or other water with it and the sacred thread in hand and throws both away, resolving, "I am no one's, and no one is mine." On emerging from the water he starts naked for the north but the *guru* stops him and gives him a loin-cloth (*kopin*), staff (*danda*), and water vessel (*jalpatra*) kept out of the neophyte's personal property. Finally, the *guru* gives him the *mantra* (spiritual formula) in secret and admits him to a particular *math* (order), *sampradia*, etc.<sup>3</sup>

The initiation rite of the Jogi order, which was also widespread in medieval Punjab, is very similar. According to the *Punjab Census Report*, 1912, "Jogi" is a corruption of *yogi*, a term applied originally to Sanyasis well advanced in the practice of *yogabhyas*. "The Jogis are really a branch of Sanyasis, the order having been founded by Guru Machhandar (Matsyendra) Nath and Gorakh Nath Sanyasis, who were devoted to the practice of Yoga and possessed great supernatural power. The followers of Guru Gorakh Nath are absorbed more in the Yoga practices than in the study of the Vedas and other religious literature, but between a real good Jogi and a *yogi* Sanyasi there is not much difference, except perhaps that the former wears the *mudra* (rings) in his ears. The Jogis worship Bhairon, the most fearful form of Shiva."<sup>4</sup> Their main sub-divisions are stated to be the Darshani or Kanphatta ("split-eared"), known as Naths, who wear the *mudra* (ear-rings); and the Aughar, who do not.

In Jogi initiation the neophyte (*chela*) is first made to fast for two or three days. A knife is then driven into the earth<sup>5</sup> and the

3. *Punjab Tribes & Castes*, III, 358.

4. P. Hari Kishen Kaul (*Punjab Census Report*, 1912), quoted in *Punjab Tribes & Castes*, III, 361.

5. The Jogis hold the earth, and everything made of it, in great respect. "The

candidate vows by it not to (1) engage in trade, (2) take employment, (3) keep dangerous weapons, (4) become angry when abused, and (5) marry. He must also scrupulously protect his ears for "a Jogi whose ears were cut used to be buried alive, but is now only excommunicated." The neophyte's scalp-lock is removed by the *guru* and he is shaved by a barber; his sacred thread is also removed. He bathes and is smeared in ashes, then given ochre clothes to wear, including the *kafni* (shroud). The *guru-mantra* is communicated secretly, and the candidate is now a probationer (*aughar*). After several months' probation his ears are pierced and ear-rings inserted by the *guru*, or an adept, who is entitled to an offering of one-and-a-quarter rupee. "The *chela*, hitherto an *aughar*, now becomes a *nath*, certain set phrases (not *mantras*) being recited."<sup>6</sup>

According to an account of the Ratn Nath Jogis the intending candidate is proffered a razor and scissors by the *guru* to deter him from entering the order. If he perseveres the *guru* cuts off a tuft of his hair and he is shaved by a barber. He is made to bathe, smeared with ashes, and then given a *kafni* (shroud), a *lingoti* (loin-cloth), and a cap to wear. "The ashes and *kafni* clearly signify his death to the world." After six months' probation his ears are pierced and earthen ear-rings inserted in them.<sup>7</sup>

After initiation a Jogi may either remain a celibate and ascetic mendicant (called Nanga, Naga, Nadi, Nihang, or Kanphatta), living on alms; or he may relapse and become a secular Jogi (called Bindi-Nagi, Sanyogi, Gharbari, or Griliisti), possessing property and married. A Jogi usually joins one or other of the various *panths* or "doors" (sub-orders), whose traditional number was twelve.

I mention, finally, the initiation rite of the Dadupanthi order, stated to have been founded by Dadu, a Gaur Brahman, who died

earthen carpet, the earthen pitcher, the earthen pillow and the earthen woof," is a saying that describes their life.

They are buried in the earth and not cremated, like the Sanyasis.

6. *Punjab Tribes & Castes*. II, 400.

7. *Ibid.*, II, 401n.

in A.D. 1703.<sup>8</sup> In this rite the *guru*, in the presence of all the *sadhus*, shaves off the neophyte's scalp-lock and covers his head with a skull-cap (*kapali*) like the one which Dadu wore. He dons ochre clothes, and is taught the *guru-mantra*, "which he must not reveal".<sup>9</sup> The rite concludes with the distribution of sweets.

### III

In my view, there can be little doubt that the anti-depilatory taboo (*kuraht*) of the Sikh initiation rite is to be understood as a specific inversion in symbolic terms of the custom of total depilation enjoined by the Jogi, Sanyasi, etc. initiations. The element of symbolic inversion, as I see it, is in fact much more pervasive but it has been overlooked before owing to the prevalence, among students of religion, of the scholarly method of adducing parallels and similarities to the neglect of significant relations of opposition.<sup>10</sup> In contradistinction to the Jogi and Sanyasi ritual of nakedness or smearing with ashes the Sikh neophyte is made to come tidily clothed to the ceremony. The ear-rings affected by the Jogis are specifically forbidden to him.<sup>11</sup> Instead of requiring the Sanyasi's resolve, "I am no one's, and no one is mine," the Sikh rite, emphasizing a new birth, requires the neophyte to reply in answer to questions that his father is Guru Gobind Singh and his mother

8. *Ibid.*, II, 215, where it is also said that other accounts make Dadu contemporary with Dara Shikoh, and still others with Guru Gobind Singh.

The *Gur Bilas* gives an interesting story about Guru Gobind Singh's meeting with a Dadupanthi: see Indubhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, II (Calcutta: A. Mukherjee & Co., 1947, repr. 1962), 94-5.

9. *Punjab Tribes & Castes*, II, 216.

10. This neglect is apparent, for example, in the work of A. van Gennep, the French sociologist, *Les rites de passage*, 1908. See English transl. by Vizedom & Caffee, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 97.

The same method is followed by S. Kapur Singh, *Parasharprasna. The Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh* (Jullundur: Hind Publishers, 1959), chs. 5 & 7.

11. Teja Singh, *Sikhism. Its Ideals and Institutions* (Calcutta: Longmans, Green & Co., 1938), p. 113.

Mata Sahib Kaur, and that he was born in Kesgarh and lives in Anandpur. Even more significantly, perhaps, the initiator, instead of being the individual *guru*, is a collective group, the Five Loved Ones, composed of any five good Sikhs. Instead of the *guru-mantra* being communicated secretly to the neophyte, as with the Sanyasis, Jogis, and Dadupanthis, the Sikh Gurus' word is spoken loud and clear by the initiators. Finally, in opposition to the Jogi vow never to touch weapons, the Sikh neophyte is invested ritually with the *kirpan* (sword, dagger) as one of the five *k*'s which he must always wear thereafter.

We must conclude, I think, that the Sikh initiation rite contains a marked theme of inversion in relation to the rites of social renunciation established by the medieval mendicant orders that preceded Sikhism. Like them Sikhism was instituted as a religious brotherhood open to all, but its spiritual and social aims were in direct contrast to what theirs had been. Whereas they had sought to obtain emancipation and deliverance through individual renunciation at the price, as their rites signify, of social death, the Sikh community was to affirm the normal social world as itself the battleground of freedom. That is why, in my opinion, its initiation rite makes the positive theme of investiture prevail wholly over the negative theme of divestiture and, taking certain widely established customs of renunciation, emphatically inverts them. The meaning of being unshorn, in particular, is thus constituted by the "negation of the negation": it signifies the permanent renunciation of renunciation.

This hypothesis requires a further consideration regarding the five *k*'s. We have so far concentrated our attention on the initiation rite itself and attempted to understand the meaning of *kes* in that context, but the five symbols of Sikhism are worn for life. Now, following initiation, the Sanyasi custom is to either wear all their hair or shave it all. The *jatadhari* Jogis follow the former course—though among all Jogis the signification of renunciation seems to be borne primarily by their pierced ears and ear-rings. The important order of Bairagis also keep long hair<sup>12</sup>, whereas the Uttradhi

12. *Punjab Tribes & Castes*, II, 36.



Dadupanthis shave the head, beard, and moustache.<sup>13</sup> The Rasul Shahis, a Muslim order founded in the eighteenth century, also shave completely the head, moustaches, and eyebrows.<sup>14</sup> In all instances where long hair is worn it is worn as matted hair (*jata*), frequently dressed in ashes. According to Sikh custom, on the other hand, unshorn hair (*kes*) is invariably associated with the comb (*kanga*, the second of the five *k*'s), which performs the function of constraining the hair and imparting an orderly arrangement to it. The *kes* and the *kanga* thus form a unitary pair of symbols, each evoking the meaning of the other, and their mutual association explains the full meaning of *kes* as distinct from *jata*. The *jata*, like the shaven head and pierced ears, symbolizes the renunciation of social citizenship; the *kes* and *kanga* its orderly assumption.

The *kirpan* (sword or dagger) and the *kara* (steel bracelet) similarly constitute another pair of symbols, neither of which can be properly understood in isolation. Without going into the evidence I merely state that, in my view, the bracelet imparts the same orderly control over the sword that the comb does over the hair. The *kirpan*, in its conjoint meaning with the *kara*, is a sword ritually constrained and thus made into the mark of every citizen's honour, not only of the soldier's vocation. Finally, the *kachh* (a loin and thigh garment), the last of the five *k*'s, is also to be understood as an agent of constraint like the comb and the bracelet, though the subject of its control is not stated. This unstated term, I think, can only be the uncircumcised male member. The *kachh* constitutes a unitary pair of meanings with it, signifying manly reserve in commitment to the procreative world as against renouncing it altogether.

In case it might be objected that I am merely profaning the mystery in advancing the last hypothesis, I hasten to quote Guru Gobind Singh himself on the subject :

“Ajmer Chand inquired what the marks of the Guru's Sikhs were, that is, how they could be recognized. The Guru replied,

13. *Ibid.*, II, 216.

14. *Ibid.*, III, 324.

‘My Sikhs shall be in their natural form, that is, without the loss of their hair or foreskin, in opposition to ordinances of the Hindus and the Muhammadans.’ ”<sup>15</sup>

We may conclude that the primary meaning of the five symbols, when they are taken together, lies in the ritual conjunction of two opposed aspects. The unshorn hair, the sword, and ( as an implicit term ) the uncircumcised male organ express the first aspect. They are assertive of human potentialities that are of themselves amoral, even dangerous, powers. The comb, the steel bracelet, and the breeches express the second aspect, that of moral constraint or discrimination. The combination of the two aspects is elaborated in the form of three pairs of polar opposites (*kanga* / *kes* : *kara* / *kirpan* : *kachh* / uncircumcised member), thus generating, with one term left unstated, the five Sikh symbols. The aspect of assertion and the aspect of constraint combine to produce what we may call (for want of a better word) the spirit of *affirmation*.

#### IV

So much then for the explanation of cultural meanings. We must now turn to the second level of analysis required by our method and consider the active social context of Sikhism's origin and growth. I do not here give all the evidence or make every qualification but state the problem in broad and general terms, as follows. The Hindu system of social relations called caste, using that term to include *varna* as well as *jati*, is in fact only the half of Hinduism. The whole Hindu *dharma* is described by the term *varnashramdharma*, that is, caste as well as the institution of the four stages or statuses (*ashramas*) of individual life. If sociologists have concentrated themselves on the institution of caste to the exclusion of the latter institution, I cannot claim to understand their reasons. For the social system of caste was always surrounded in reality by a penumbral region, as it were, of non-caste, where flourished the renunciatory religious orders whose principles abrogated those of caste and birth ;

15. M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion* ( Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1909 ), V, 99.

and the fourth *ashrama* (*sannyas*) constituted a door through which the individual was recommended to pass from the world of caste to that of its denial. The mutual relation of the two worlds (and I have no doubt that it was mutual) is of the greatest significance to a full understanding of either.<sup>16</sup> The total structure of the medieval world, including its political aspect, was thus split up into a tripartite division among (1) the rulers (the world of *rajya*), (2) the caste system (*varna, grihasta*), and (3) the orders of renunciation (*sannyas*). These three features, and their interrelations with one another, define the total social geography of cis-Himalayan Asia in the medieval period.

An order like the Aghor-panthi Jogis, who appear to have smeared themselves with excrement, drunk out of a human skull, and occasionally dug up the body of a newly-buried child to eat it, "thus carrying out the principle that nothing is common or unclean to its extreme logical conclusion,"<sup>17</sup> evidently constituted the truly living shadow of caste orthodoxy. The theme of protest could hardly be carried further (unless it was by the Bam-margis who added sexual promiscuity to the list!). Yet it could be reliably said of other Jogi sub-orders that, "in the Simla hills the Jogis were originally mendicants, but have now become house-holders," and that the secular Jogis, called Sanyogis, "in parts of the Punjab form a true caste".<sup>18</sup> We can resolve this seeming contradiction only if we regard both these Jogi conditions as forming the different stages or phases of a single cycle of development. According to this view, we should say that any particular order or sub-order that once renounced caste with all its social rights and duties and walked out into the ascetic wilderness through the front door of *sannyas*, could later

16. Caste (and particularly the position of Brahmans) was stated by Max Weber to be "the fundamental institution of Hinduism": see H. H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948), p. 396

This purely one-sided view is especially curious in the German sociologist since he was the first to make use (in 1916) of the "partly excellent scientific Census Reports" (*ibid.*, p. 397) which also form the basis of *Punjab Tribes & Castes* and of the present paper.

17. *Punjab Tribes & Castes*, II, 404.

18. *Ibid.*, II, 399n., 409

become disheartened or lose the point of its protest, and even end by seeking to re-enter the house of caste through the back door. Of course, as a particular order or section fell back, so to speak, from the frontier of asceticism and abandoned its non-procreative, propertyless, and occupationless existence, its function within the total system of *varnashramdharma* would be fulfilled by some other order or section, since the ascetic or protestant impulse itself remained a constant feature. During its ascetic period an order or sub-order may occupy one or other of two positions, or pass through both successively. It may either adopt a theory and practice completely opposed to those of caste, like the Aghor-panthis and Bam-margis, and be for that reason regarded as heterodox and esoteric; or it might remain within the pale and link itself to the caste system through the normal sectarian affiliations of caste people. A "heterodox" or antinomian sect, we should say, is one opposed to caste as its living shadow; an "orthodox" sect is complementary to the caste system, its other half within Hinduism.

I would not say that all historically-known orders of renunciation in fact passed through these various stages of development, but I maintain that we must construct some such analytical scheme of their typical life-history with reference primarily to their origin, function, and direction of movement in relation to the caste system. For that would enable us to classify the vast number of known orders and sub-orders into a limited number of sociological types and obviate many difficulties in our study of them. In particular, until we can fully understand the developmental cycle of medieval mendicant orders we cannot place the political phenomena of the "fighting Jogis" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the contemporaneous militant struggles of the Roshaniya sect<sup>19</sup>, the Satnami Revolt of 1675, or the plunder of Dacca in 1763 by Sanyasis, etc., in their proper perspective.

As a social movement early Sikhism no doubt possessed many features in common with other religious brotherhoods of a certain type. If Sikhism as a whole, nevertheless, broke free from the convoluted cycle of caste versus non-caste that overtook other protestant

19. Founded by Bayazid, Pir-i Roshan, b Jullundur, 1525.

or antinomian brotherhoods, to what cause or causes did it owe its freedom? It is true that Sikhism, as we noted earlier, barred the door of asceticism and so did not lose itself in the esoteric wilderness, but we have also to explain why it did not duly return, as so many others did, to the citadel of caste. The new departure of Sikhism, in my interpretation, was that it set out to annihilate the categorical partitions, intellectual and social, of the medieval world. It rejected the opposition of the common citizen or householder versus the renouncer, and of the ruler versus these two, refusing to acknowledge them as separate and distinct modes of existence. It acknowledged the powers of the spheres of *rajya*, *sannyas*, and *grihasta*, but sought to invest their virtues conjointly in a single body of faith and conduct.

The social function of the Sikh initiation rite is, I think, precisely this: to affirm the characteristic rights and responsibilities of the three spheres as equally valid and to invest them as an undivided unit in the neophyte. The new Sikh, therefore, takes no Jogi vow to renounce his procreative power and never marry; instead he dons the *kachh* of continence. Instead of vowing like the Jogi never to touch weapons, or take other employment, or engage in trade, every occupation is henceforth open to him, including that of soldiering, householdership, or political command, and save only that of taking alms. The single key of the renunciation of renunciation was thus charged to unlock all dividing doors in the mansion of medievalism.

If my previous pairing of symbols and the assumption of an unstated term be accepted, then the five symbols of Sikhism may be said to signify, in their respective pairs, the virtues of *sannyas yoga* (*kes* and *kanga*), *grihasta yoga* (*kachh* and the uncircumcised state), and *rajya yoga* (*kirpan* and *kara*). As the authenticating sign and seal of Sikhism, the five *k*'s together affirm the unity of man's estate as being all of a piece: this we may take to be the final meaning and function of remaining forever unshorn in the world.

# ORIGIN OF SIKHISM

## *Socio-Cultural Context*

**Kirpal Singh**

SIKHISM was a protest against religious hypocrisy, ritualism, fanaticism and formalism. In order to understand its genesis it is essential to study the religious conditions prevalent in the Punjab during 15th and 16th centuries. Geographically, Punjab being the gateway of India provided a meeting ground for various cultures and civilizations. This region was the first to be conquered by the Muslim invaders. The Muslim rule was firmly established there and the wave of proselytism had spread there with overwhelming force. According to Arnold, Baba Farid-ud-din, a thirteenth century Muslim saint of Multan, was responsible for converting sixteen tribes to Islam. He, however, concludes that mostly the people were converted by sword.<sup>1</sup> However, there was a good deal of contrast between the two religions, viz., Hinduism and Islam. They fundamentally differed in their theologies, conception and method of worship and everything connected with daily life. The Muslims were monotheists, whereas the Hindus believed in several gods and goddesses. The democratic ideas of Muslims leading to equality offered a great contrast to the caste ridden society of the Hindus. The Hindus worshipped cow whereas the Muslims relished beef which was extremely abhorred by the Hindus. The Muslim congregational prayer was radically different from Hindu mode of worship. The music which was an essential part of Hindu religious ceremonies was forbidden within the precincts or even neighbourhood of mosques. In prayer the Muslims turned toward the West and Hindus toward the East. Muslims considered the Hindus *Kafirs*, infidels, whereas the Hindus termed the Muslims as *Malechhas*, defiled ones. Bhai Gurdas (1637 A.D.), a contemporary of Guru Arjan and one of the most prominent Sikh writers states "Hindus

1. Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*, p. 281.

go to the Ganges, the Muslims to Kaaba in Mecca. Muslims take to circumcision while Hindus are zealous for their thread and forehead mark. These call on Ram those on Rahim.<sup>2</sup> J. D. Cunningham has rightly stated, "Custom jarred with custom, opinion with opinion, the public mind became agitated and found no sure resting place with Brahmin or Muslim with Mahadev or Mohammad."<sup>3</sup>

True religion has taken wings and vanished.  
Falsity prevails like the darkness of the  
darkest night.  
The moon of Truth is visible nowhere.<sup>4</sup>

According to G. C. Narang "the springs of true religion had been checked up by the weeds of unmeaning ceremonial, debasing superstitions, the selfishness of the priests and indifference of the people. Form had supplanted the reality." Bhai Gurdas has described the religious condition in the following words :—

"Leaving aside truth the Brahmins and Maulanas were fighting over trifles." *Sach kinare rai gaya khai marde bahman maulane.*

It is very significant to note that the Muslim rulers were inflicting all types of cruelties on their non-muslim subjects in the name of religion. According to the prevalent notions the Muslim state was to root out heresay and extricate fidelity as it had been laid down in the Quran :

"Say to the infidel if they desist from their unbelief, what is past is forgiven them. But if they return to it.....fight them till strife be at end and the religion be all of God's."<sup>5</sup> It was considered the highest duty of a Muslim ruler to carry on Jihad by waging war against the infidel lands (dar-ul-Harb) till they became part of Islam and their populations converted into true believers. Only two classes of people were recognised, Ahal-i-Islam, viz., Muslims

2. *Var I*, Bhai Gurdas, Pauri No. 21.

3. J. D. Cunningham, *History of Sikhs*, p. 33.

4. *Var Majh*, shlok 16

5. A. L. Srivastava, *Medieval Indian Culture*, p. 4.

and Ahal-i-Kitab who believed in revealed book. The christians were taken to be in the later category. The rest of the population was called Zimmis which means protected people living under a contract with an obligation to pay the *jaziya*. It has been stated in unmistakable terms that idolaters have got no right to live in a Muslim State. They must either embrace Islam or suffer death. Since the vast population of Hindus could not be massacred, the Muslim rulers heaped on the Hindus all types of insults and degradations in order to compel them to embrace Islam. Forcible conversion was the order of the day. It is on this account that Dr. Murry Titus has rightly stated that "it must not be forgotten that the very essence of Islam is that it is both a religion and system of government, a church

The orthodox section of the Muslims chafed at the Hanifite doctrine which was officially accepted by the Muslim rulers of India, as Qazi Mugh-is-Uddin pointed out to Ala-Ud-Din Khilji. It was Dr. Abu Hanifa alone who assented to the imposition of *jaziya* on the Hindus. Doctors of other schools allow no other alternative but death or Islam.<sup>7</sup> Sultan Mahmud followed this policy. Barani writes 'If Mahmud had gone to India once more he would have brought under his sword all the Brahmins of Hind who in that vast land are the cause of continuance of laws of infidelity and of the strength of idolaters, he would have cut off the heads of two hundred or three hundred thousand Hindu chiefs.'<sup>8</sup>

Besides the imposition of *jaziya* the Hindus were not permitted to conduct an open worship and religious propaganda. According to Dr. Srivastava, during the reign of Ala-Ud-Din Khilji, Firoze Tuglak and Sikander Lodhi, the Hindus were not allowed to put on fine clothes or ride on horse back. The Hindus were forbidden from building new temples and repairing the old ones. The temple of Keshav Deva at the birth place of Lord Krishna at Mathura was razed to ground by Feroze Tuglak ; when it was rebuilt it was again

6. Murray Titus, *Islam in India*, p. 14.

7. *Medieval Indian Culture*, p. 42.

8. *Delhi Sultanate*, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, p. 621.



destroyed by Sikandar Lodhi.<sup>9</sup> According to Bhai Gurdas, the Hindu temples were razed to the ground and at those very places and with the same material mosques had been built.<sup>10</sup>

Guru Nanak, however, never agreed to this type of organised tyranny over one section of the people. According to him the Muslims were not serving the cause of their religion by oppressing the non-Muslims. He stated : 'It is very difficult to be a real Muslim. Possess the necessary qualities before ye call yourself Muslim. First of all love your faith and leave off vanity and pride of riches. Be humble but be firm and shake off dread of death and life. Submit to God with patience, believe in him and sacrifice self unto Him. Be merciful to all living beings ; then alone you call yourself Musalman.'<sup>11</sup>

As a result of Muslim rulers' religious persecution, the Hindus were suppressed and dejected. On account of fear they had adopted the ways of the Muslims but secretly they worshipped their idols also which resulted in hypocrisy. Guru Nanak has described this phenomenon : 'Outwardly the Hindus had adopted the ways of Turks and read the Quran but inwardly they worshipped idols also.'<sup>12</sup>  
*Antar puja parhe kateban sanjam Turkan bhai.*

The onrush of Islam spread confusion and consternation among the Hindus. Not being able to fight in open field they shut themselves up in the impregnable fortress of caste, any fallen person could not be readmitted into the Hindu fold. The Hindus of low caste embraced Islam as Dr. Titus has remarked "Any out-caste man who wished to escape the insults and degradation imposed upon him by his social status could easily find a welcome freedom by accepting Islam. In this way alone can the large number of so called low caste Muslims of India, such as weavers, water carriers, leather workers and even sweepers be accounted for."<sup>13</sup>

9. *Medieval Indian Culture*, p 43

10. Bhai Gurdas, *Var I*, Pauri No. 20

11. *Var Majh M. I.*, Shalok 8.

12. *Asa de Var*, Shlok No. 16.

13. *Islam in India*, page 14.

Bhai Gurdas has rightly described the condition of the Hindus, 'there was quite a confusion when four castes and many *ashrams* got crystallized. There were *sanyasis* of different denomination and Yogis had set up twelve *pāths*. The Jangams and Jains indulged in self deception and mutual bickerings. The Brahmans set up various contests between the Vedas, the Shastras and the Purānas.'<sup>14</sup>

Under the influence of Vedanta several intelligent persons among the Hindus used to renounce the world and go to the forests and mountains and spend their lives there. Thus they escaped the struggle and responsibility for facing the new challenge. Bhai Gurdas has stated, 'The intelligent men under the garb of Sidhs have hidden themselves in the mountains who should launch the struggle to reform the society.'<sup>15</sup>

The popular religion before Sikhism was confined to peculiar ways of eating, drinking, bathing and other observances. Social taboos about eating etc. were found very irksome. Mohsin Fani has quoted an example. He states that one Hindu youngman had decided to embrace Islam as he was fed up with the Hindu restrictions about meat-eating etc. He came across a Sikh and intimated him about his decision. The Sikh advised him not to embrace Islam and be a sikh of Guru Hargobind, the sixth guru, who was the spiritual leader of the Sikhs at that time and take whatever food he liked.<sup>16</sup>

Before Sikhism there had been several movements to reform the Hindu society but they failed to make any notable impression. Cunningham states "Ramanand and Gorakh had preached religious equality and Chaitan had repeated that faith levelled caste. Kabir had denounced images and appealed to the people in their own tongue, and Vallabh had taught that effectual devotion was compatible with the ordinary duties of the world. But these good and able men appear to have been so impressed with the nothingness

14. *First var of Bhai Gurdas, Pauri No 19.*

15. *Var I, Bhai Gurdas, Pauri 29.*

16. *Makhaz-Twarikh-i-Sikhan, Sikh History Society, Amritsar, p. 48-49.*

of this life that they deemed the amelioration of man's social condition to be unworthy of a thought. They aimed chiefly at the emancipation from priestcraft or from grossness of idolatory and polytheism. They formed pious associations of contented quietists or they gave themselves up to the contemplation of futurity in the hope of approaching bliss rather than call upon their fellow creatures to throw aside every social as well as religious trammel and to arise a new people freed from the debasing corruption of ages. They perfected forms of dissent rather than plant the germs of nation and their sect remains to this day as they left them."<sup>17</sup>

Thus this atmosphere of religious antagonism followed by political oppression by one religious group resulted in frustration and all round degradation for the large majority of people. Instead of meeting this challenge adequately the oppressed began to believe in escapist philosophy, viz., calling this world and its problems as *maya-delusion* and retiring to the places of loneliness. This socio-religious phenomena which required some adjustment with the existing values of life gave rise to many reformist movements.

17. J. D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p. 38.

GURU GOBIND SINGH

23 JUNE, 1966



## GURU GOBIND SINGH AND ISLAM

C. H. Lochlin

SUNNI Islam by its definiteness, not to say fanaticism, of belief and its aggressiveness in practice has exerted tremendous pressure wherever it has established itself, especially as a Muslim State. In its extreme orthodox form Islam during the reign of some of the Mughal emperors demanded an all-or-none reaction : either believe and recite the creed or die as a rebellious unbeliever (*kāfir*). Islam had been established in northern India for several centuries before Guru Gobind Singh came on the scene ; so it is not surprising that a man as sensitive to spiritual truth as the Guru should find congenial beliefs in Islam, both Sufi and Sunni, and yet as a free man should oppose to the death any attempt to force conformity to them.

### THE USE OF MUSLIM NAMES FOR GOD

The *Jāp* is the introductory invocation of the *Granth* of the tenth Guru. There seems to be general agreement that it was written by Guru Gobind Singh himself. It probably aims to give the Sikhs something similar to the Thousand Names of Vishnu of the Hindus ; and there are just under a thousand names in the Japji Sahib. Among these there are about seventy-five Muslim names or epithets of God. Only a few of these are among the Muslim's ninety-nine names of Allah, such being *Rahīm*, *Karīm*, (Merciful), *Razākar* (Provider), *Āruv* (Pardoner), and *Salāmai* (Peaceful) ; but all the Names used in the *Jāp* would be familiar and congenial to Punjabi Muslims. The Muhammadan tongue and ear would surely delight in *Allāh* and *Nirsharīk* ; *Karīm ur Rahīm* (Generous in Mercy) ; *Husn ul Chirāg* (Beauteous Light) ; *Garīb un Niwāj* (*Niwās*), (Merciful to the Poor) ; *Kamāl Karīm* (Perfect in Mercy) ; *Rājak Rahīm* (Gracious Provider) ; *Bihisht un Niwās* (Dweller in Heaven) ; *Hamesh us Salām* (Ever Peaceful) ; *Ganīm us Shikast*, *Garīb ul Parast* (Breaker of Tyrants, Protector of

the Poor) and so many others. Frequently Arabic and Hindi are used together, as in *Jāp* 157 :

*Parparam īs haiṇ,*  
*Samast ul adīs haiṇ,*  
*Adesh ul alekh haiṇ,*  
*Hamesh ul abhekh haiṇ.*

Thou art the Supreme Ishvar,  
 Invisible to all,  
 Beyond country of description,  
 Ever formless.

It is quite likely that these, besides being sonorous and dignified, were used to attract the interest of Muslims and gain their confidence and friendship. The Guru had Muslim contingents in his army as well as Muslim friends to whom he would wish to offer something congenial. Then, too, this may be an early effort to break down communalism, an effort that, alas ! was frustrated by the fanaticism all too prevalent in those times.

The Guru is quite semetic in his outlook when considering the subject of incarnation. In the *Jāp* the Immortal is Ajanam, without birth (vs. 34). He is without a body, has no name. The teaching of the *Bhagvad Gītā* is rejected where Krishna is said to become incarnate from age to age (*Gīta* 4:8) ; for "How can He Who has no form, no colour, be said to be blue-coloured Krishna ?" *Qurān* : "*Lam yalid. wa lam yūlad.*" "He does not beget, He is not begotten." (*Sura* 112).

The *hūrīs* (*hūr*), those celestial maidens who hover over the battlefields to welcome to their embrace those who fall in the fight were popular in Islam as well as in ancient Hindu lore. They were congenial to the Guru's purpose as well, and served to add a vivid feminine touch to the dreadful battle descriptions of the *Vichitra Natak* :

Thousands of Hūrīs in heaven  
 Choose in marriage those who fall in the van.  
(*Vichitra Natak*, 3:12)

As the mighty heroes roar, the hūrīs swirl about the  
 battlefield,  
 And superbly robed ones move about and fill the heaven.  
 “Respected Sirs, are you well? May you live forever!  
 We sacrifice ourselves for you”, thus they speak—  
 “I take hold of thy garment, O Raja,  
 Marry me! Abandoning such a brave man as thou,  
 To whom then could I propose?  
 Come and wed me. I wish only to serve thee.  
 Leave Lanka soon, and come to the abode of the gods!”  
 (Ram Avtar 591-607)

Here then was a strong reinforcement of the will to fight, for death in battle for a righteous cause offered a sure pathway to heaven, both for the Singh and for the Muslim,<sup>1</sup> in addition to the *nam japna* of the Sants and the *zikr* of the Sufis.

It is a well known fact that the Guru had a band of 500 Pathan mercenaries in his army. Khushwant Singh gives the reason for this that “he made sure that his crusade would not be wrongly construed as one of Sikhs against Muslims: the nucleus of his private army consisted of five hundred Pathan mercenaries.”<sup>2</sup> Their desertion just before the Battle of Bhangani does not contradict this statement, for they were mercenaries first and Muslims second, and were all out after plunder. His contingent of Udasis also deserted in the face of what seemed to be superior forces of the enemy. Professor Kartar Singh, likewise says of these Muslim soldiers: “Their presence in the Guru’s army gives a lie direct to the assertions of persons like Latif who would have us believe that the Guru was an ‘irreconcilable and inveterate enemy of every Mohammadan.’ He had no ill-will against any individual. It was the evil system that he wanted to destroy, and it was against its defenders that his efforts were directed.”<sup>3</sup> Muslim friends helped the Guru to escape after the siege of Chamkaur in the guise of *Uchh ka Pir*. If they had not come to the rescue it

1. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, p. 244.

Sale, *The Koran*, p. 489.

2. Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p. 78.

3. Kartar Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 169



is hard to see how the Guru could have evaded the swarms of Muslim troops out looking for him.

#### MALERKOTLA AND SARHIND

These two Muslim cities show us both sides of the Guru's dealing with Muslims. After the retreat from Anandpur the Guru's two younger sons, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, with their grandmother Gujar, were betrayed by an old Hindu servant and captured by the *wazir* of Sarhind. The two boys, aged seven and nine, refused to recant and accept Islam, so were cruelly put to death by Wazir Khan. One tradition has it that they were bricked up alive in a wall; another that they were beheaded. At any rate, the Nawab of Malerkotla earned the lasting gratitude of the Sikhs by protesting against the putting of the children to death. A modern Sikh historian puts it thus: 'The Sikhs have always remembered this protest of the Nawab with gratitude, and throughout their troubled relations with the Muslim powers they have always spared the house of Malerkotla from their attacks.'<sup>4</sup>

Macauliffe relates Guru Gobind Singh's reaction to this news as follows :

"While the Guru was listening to the narrative he was digging up a shrub with his knife. He said, 'As I dig up this shrub by the roots, so shall the Turks be extirpated'. He inquired if anyone except the Nawab of Malerkotla had spoken on behalf of the children. The messenger replied in the negative. The Guru then said that after the roots of the oppressive Turks were all dug up, the roots of the Nawab should still remain. His Sikhs should one day come and lay Sarhind waste."<sup>5</sup>

Sarhind and Malerkotla exemplify the fulfilment of this prophecy. Banda Singh had been given a special commission by Guru Gobind Singh just before his death to behead Wazir Khan, the Governor

4. Teja Singh-Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 73.

5. Macauliffe, vol. V ; 199.

of Sarhind, who had been responsible for the murder. It so happened that Wazir Khan was beheaded in the battle at Sarhind, and the town itself was thoroughly sacked and many of its inhabitants slaughtered by Banda's followers. On the other hand, the Sikhs have never molested Malerkotla even when the whole surrounding country was devastated. This was true during Banda Singh's expedition into the Punjab, when the Guru's words were fresh in the memory. It is still more amazing that the city with its predominantly Muslim population was not molested in the terrible communal riots attending the Partition of India in 1947. Even though the city lies in the heart of the Malwa country near the Sikh States of Nabha and Patiala, the Sikhs remembered their Guru's words and obeyed them. Malerkotla today remains the only Muslim city in the Punjab. In answer to a query about present-day conditions in Malerkotla, Rev. W.D. Barr, Presbyterian missionary at Khanna, writes on September 11, 1963: 'I too have been interested in the effect of Guru Gobind Singh's reactions to the concern expressed by the Nawab in his day. I talked with the present Nawab on two occasions about this very question. He told me some facts that verify the influence during Partition of Guru Gobind Singh's declarations. I suggested that the presence of the Nawab's army lessened the attacks by Sikhs on Muslims. He stated that he had document evidence to show that the Sikhs actually responded to protect Muslims by belief in what Gobind Singh had commanded. Muslims en route to Malerkotla via train were attacked, but when the Sikhs knew they were going to Malerkotla they spared them and personally escorted them to Malerkotla. Many Muslims fleeing for their lives were being pursued by Sikhs trying to kill them, but when they crossed the border of Malerkotla State they stopped and granted them their lives. There is no question in the Nawab's mind but that the Muslims were spared in Malerkotla State directly because of Gobind Singh's declaration that the Muslims of that State were to be protected.

'The Nawab has Gobind Singh's sword, sent to his ancestors after Gobind Singh heard of his defence of his family before the Nawab of Sarhind. He also has the document sent to the Emperor of Delhi by his forefather as a protest against the cruelty of the

Nawab of Sarhind. There are 32,000 Muslims living in Malerkotla right now, and they are at peace with their Sikh, Hindu, and Christian neighbours.'

### THE GURU AND EMPEROR AURANGZEB

Aurangzeb was a strict Sunni who followed the law and traditions in every detail. He fasted often, and knew the whole Qurān by heart. Yet his religious beliefs had little effect on his official life, for "his reliance on mere cunning as the principal instrument of statecraft testified to a certain smallness of mind, and moreover was ineffective in practice."<sup>6</sup> Something of the Emperor's power may be gathered from a description of his camp in the Deccan given by an Italian lawyer about A.D. 1700. Aurangzeb's camp had in it 5,00,000 people, was 30 miles in circumference, and had 250 separate bazars, where goods from the most mediocre to the most luxurious were for sale.

At the time of their final confrontation at Anandpur, the Guru's army had been largely destroyed. His family was scattered. His two older sons had been killed in the last stand at Chamkaur, his two younger sons cruelly murdered by the *wazir* of Sarhind. He himself had to flee in exile to South India, and was never again to visit the Punjab. Yet his faith in God never wavered; and in his darkest hour he wrote, in answer to the Emperor's summons to come to him in Delhi, the *Zafar Nāma*, or Epistle of Victory. This is written in Persian verse, but in Gurmukhi characters.

In the *Zafar Nāma*, the Guru reminds the Emperor that the real reason the Hill Rajas wished to destroy him was because of two things a Muslim should approve, namely opposition to idolatry and levelling of caste distinctions. The Epistle is mainly a homily on keeping one's word. The Guru upbraids Aurangzeb for breaking his oath taken on his sacred book, the Qurān. This refers to the treachery of his generals in the battle of Anandpur, when, after promising safe conduct to the Guru's forces for leaving the city they attacked and looted the

6. *Oxford History of India*, 3rd edition, p. 423-425

baggage train, only to find that the Guru had anticipated treachery and filled the baggage sacks with rubbish. They repeated their perfidy in the final evacuation, also under "safe-conduct". He calls the Emperor *Paimān Shikan*, "Oath Breaker", and reminds him that final judgment is in God's hands, before Whom even the Emperor must one day stand and give account. The tenor of the Guru's remarks may be gathered from this: Did I not know that thou, O faithless man, wert a worshipper of wealth and a perjurer? Thou keepest no faith and observest no religion. Thou knowest not God, and believedst not in Muhammad. He who hath regard for his religion never swerveth from his promise. ... Thou art monarch of the world, but far from thee is religion

(Macauliffe, p. 203.205.)

What kind of bravery is this,—

To silence the embers, which only crackle louder  
and burst forth into a mightier flame?

*Zafar nāma*, p. 79

We are told in the *Mahan Kosh* that the Guru wrote to the Emperor "loving advice". This was probably some other letter than the above, for we are told that the old man was moved by it. Perhaps it brought some comfort in his last days, and that from an enemy whom he had cruelly wronged. Indeed, the Emperor needed comfort. In contrast to the Guru's Letter of Victory, the Emperor's last days were sad, and he felt that life had defeated him. In his famous letter to his sons which might well be termed his Epistle of Defeat, he wrote: "I know not who I am, where I shall go, or what will happen to this sinner full of sins... My years have gone by profitless. God has been in my heart, yet my darkened eyes have not recognized his light..... There is no hope for me in the future..... The army is confounded, and without heart or help, even as I am, apart from God, with no rest for the heart..... I have greatly sinned, and know not what torment awaits me."

"The sternest critic of the character and deeds of Aurangzeb can hardly refuse to recognize the pathos of these lamentations, or to feel some sympathy for the old man on his lonely death-bed."<sup>7</sup>

7. *Ibid.*, p. 426.

## THE GURU AND EMPEROR BAHADUR SHAH

We have seen how Aurangzeb's religious fanaticism called for either conversion to Islam, death as an infidel, or a battle for life ; and how Guru Gobind Singh chose the latter. We find that his relationships with Bahadur Shah were most friendly. In the contest for the succession to the imperial throne, the Guru aided his old friend Bahadur Shah against his brother Azam. "This drew him closer to the new Emperor, who invited him to Agra and presented him with a rich dress of honour and a jewelled scarf worth 60 thousand rupees. The Guru was pleased with the interview, and saw in it the possibility of ending the age-old differences with the Mughals."<sup>8</sup> The Guru accompanied the new Emperor into the Deccan. Much controversy has taken place as to the Guru's motives in doing so. From what we know of the Guru's independent nature and his high ideals, it seems impossible that he went as a mercenary soldier against the brave Marhattas. The *Tārīkh-i-Bahādurshāhī*, as quoted by Dr. Ganda Singh, makes his motives travel and propaganda : "Guru Gobind, one of the descendents of Nanak, had come into these districts to travel and accompanied the royal camp. He was in the habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics and all sorts of people."<sup>9</sup> The Guru's role as a conciliator must not be forgotten, and it is quite likely that he tried to persuade Bahadur Shah to walk in the ways of peace. However this may be, the Guru eventually left the Emperor and settled in Nander in Hyderabad Deccan.

A good story is told of a conversation between the Emperor and the Guru which brings out the religious attitudes of each. The Emperor maintained that whoever repeated the Islamic creed would find salvation whatever his character and conduct might be. The Guru held that something more was necessary, namely, genuine faith and upright conduct. To prove his point he sent a servant off to the bazar with a bad rupee on which the creed was stamped. The money lender, of course, refused to honour it. The creed, the Guru

8. Teja Singh-Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 77.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 77 note.

reminded the Emperor, even in the royal market-place was of no value on a counterfeit rupee !

At Abchnagar, Nander in the Deccan, the Guru was stabbed by two Muslim fanatics, possibly hired assassins of Wazir Khan whose guilty conscience made him fear the Guru's growing influence over the Emperor Bahadur Shah.<sup>10</sup> A few days later he died of these wounds. Suraj Partap states<sup>11</sup> that the Guru knowing that death was near, mounted his funeral pyre and lighted it with his own hand. Professor Kartar Singh, however, quite definitely states<sup>12</sup> :

“They felt awe-struck at what had so unexpectedly happened. All of them sat together and decided to cremate the Guru's body before day-break. This was done.”

#### THE GURU AND ISLAM

The Guru, as we have seen, had Muslim friends, such as those in his army and even Aurangzeb's son, Emperor Bahadur Shah, and those who helped him escape as *Uchh ka Pir* after the battle of Chamkaur. He fought against Aurangzeb and his minions not simply because they were Muslims, but because he regarded them as fanatics and hypocrites. It must be remembered that two of the Guru's major battles were with the Hindu Hill Rajas. Even though Guru Gobind Singh had to spend much of his life in warfare against the Mughals, a strain of longing for peace and fellowship with both Hindus and Muslims can be detected in his writings, such as from the *Akal Ustat* which sounds like the ironic message of Guru Nanak :

The temple and the mosque are the same,  
*Puja* and *namaz* are the same,  
 All men are one, it is through error that  
 they appear different :

10. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

11. *Sri Gur Partap Suraj Granth*, Editor Dr. Vir Singh, Vol. 13.

12. Kartar Singh, *Life of Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 255.

Their eyes are the same, their ears are the same,  
They are of one body, one build,  
A compound of earth, air, fire, and water.  
Allah and Abhek are same,  
The Purān and the Qurān are the same,  
They are alike, all the creation of the One.  
( vs. 16 : 86.)

## GURU GOBIND SINGH AND THE SOCIAL IDEAL

Gopal Singh

GURU GOBIND SINGH is one of those rare idea-men in history who brought about a fundamental metamorphosis in the outlook of man. And, not merely this, he also invented institutional tools to actualize these ideas and ideals, and used them in his life-time to leave a worthy example behind.

If Guru Gobind's idea would only have been to put his own seal on the teachings the house of Nanak had imparted to men and women throughout India, and even beyond, for over two centuries, the work, inspiring in itself, would have been but of limited social utility. Not that the ideas that Nanak had thrown up were not of a fundamentally different character than the ones with which our ancient race had grappled through the ages : the realisation in human life not only of God who is the God of all humans, everywhere, and the living spirit behind all phenomena through the discipline of *nam-yoga*, (this, however, had been emphasised variously by the *Vedanta*, the *Gīta*, the Muslim Sufi cult and by Bhaktas, like Kabir, even before Nanak) but to actualise this idea, institutionally, by accepting men of all creeds and castes into the Sikh-fold, and by accepting honest secular and social activity as an adjunct of a spiritually awakened soul. More, by discarding the taboos of a social dress, diet or language, and of chosen races and men for the knowledge of God and favoured positions in society, Nanak had in one sweep, thrown all contrary, though age-old, religious and secular ideas to the winds.

That the Sikh movement for full two centuries was attacked by the orthodox both amongst Hindus and Muslims and accepted by the small, though sensitive sections of both, is a testimony to the freshness of Nanak's approach and its cataclysmic social content, in as much as not only was Nanak imprisoned by Babur but except



for Akbar's regime, the Mughal authorities had acted with overt hostility to the house of Nanak. Guru Arjan was tortured to death; and after him, Guru Har Gobind had to take up arms. Soon after, however, the Sikh movement again lapsed into quietism, so much so that even though Guru Har Rai, the seventh pontiff, kept 2200 *sawars* with him, he never used them. So tender-hearted was he that once when a flower was torn from its stem with an unguarded movement of his flappy garment, he was so shocked that he kept his garment assembled in his arms ever thereafter. Guru Teg Bahadur, the father of Guru Gobind Singh, was beheaded in Delhi, under orders from Aurangzeb, for the challenge he caused the Hindus of north India to throw to the emperor that whatever lead Guru Teg Bahadur would give them in the matter of accepting Islam, that they would follow, without demur. And the advice the Guru gave them was, everyone is free to have a religion of his choice, and practice a way of life which his conscience dictates, and not which the ruler of the times owns and pushes down their throats. This martyrdom was accepted, most willingly and non-violently, like the earlier one of Guru Arjan, but now had come a time when without losing self-respect and the will to live conscientiously, it was impossible to exist. And, so, Guru Gobind Singh decided, finally, that without the use of arms, no society could protect the vitals of its soul.

"In this world, Time is on the side of the Sword. The mightier the arms, the better one's destiny." But was this not the same message that Mohammad before and Lenin and Nietzsche after him had given to the people? Here also there is a vital distinction. Guru Gobind Singh certainly approved of the social dynamism that the prophet Mohammad had imparted to spiritual awakening, but, he never condoned the use of arms either to force people into his fold, or to divide mankind between the faithful and the infidel. It is a recorded fact of history that during the regimes of Ranjit Singh and the princely Sikh Cis-Satluj States, there never was any persecution on grounds either of religion, or race. On the contrary, their earlier persecutors shared power with the Sikhs in proportion to their numbers, if not more. Those that were conquered were offered liberal *jagirs*. The *gurmatta* system that prevailed during the period of the Sikh *misals* before Ranjit Singh in which the whole

Panth resolved at the Akal Takht, the highest religious seat of Sikh authority, before launching upon any adventure, was abolished by Ranjit Singh, whose regime, as is testified by various neutral observers, was totally free from cruelty and religious persecution. Arts—painting, caligraphy, poetry and architecture, flourished and when the British conquered the Punjab, it was a Muslim bard, Shah Mohammad, who gave vent to the feelings of utter anguish at the loss of an empire “where Hindus and Muslims lived in amity as never before !”

It was a miracle of Guru Gobind Singh’s teachings and examples, that throughout the history of the Sikhs, unlike that of the Rajputs and Marathas, men from every denomination fought on the side of the Sikhs, and the Sikhs took up causes not only their own, but with which they were not even remotely concerned, as in the case of Rohillas during the eighteenth century. That the Muslims manned the artillery of Ranjit Singh, that the most important ministers in his Cabinet were not Sikhs, but Muslims and Hindus and that his munificence towards the religious shrines and divines and literature of the other communities was as marked as towards the Sikhs, make it amply clear that there was something more in the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh than appears to the casual eye.

Not once did Guru Gobind Singh, for instance, employ treachery or surprise attack during the many battles that he personally fought and led. His diplomacy was open. In his letter to Aurangzeb, called the *Zafar Nāma*, he details the cruelties the house of Babar had heaped upon the house of Nanak and yet, in his autobiographical writings, the *Vichitra Natak*, he avers :—

“There are two houses created by God :  
the one of Nanak and the other of Babar.  
The one leads man on the path of the spirit,  
And the other in the affairs of the state.”

When one of Guru Gobind Singh’s followers, Bhai Kanhiya, was reported as having ministered to the needs of the wounded, both amongst friend and foe, the Guru instead of reprimanding him, blessed him, saying, “You have understood the spirit of my teachings :

others only swear by them." Even while fighting a life and death struggle simultaneously against the Mughals and the Rajput chiefs of the Shivalik hills in his writings, he nowhere differentiated between one man and another.

Even on the battle field, he never fired the first shot. Twice when two Muslim generals challenged him on the battle field, he let them strike first. And, whenever forgiveness was asked of him, he forgave with all his heart. Immediately after the death of Aurangzeb, when he was asked to help Bahadur Shah regain the imperial throne, he did not for a moment hesitate to do so. But once he thought justice would not be available even from him, he gave Banda orders to take up arms against his regime. Therefore, what the Guru emphasised was that power must reside in clean, ethical and just hands, and a rebellion was justified only "when all other avenues of protest, including willing martyrdom, were of no avail."

Lenin, whose organisation has been compared by Toynbee to that of the Sikh Khalsa, also divided men into classes which according to him, were eternally antagonistic. He wanted only the "workers of the world to unite", to finish off non-workers, non-believers, non-conformists, peasants, and even mere intellectuals. The Guru wanted the whole mankind to unite under the banner of the "spirit," where he who has, keeps it in trust for society and God ; and he who hasn't, instead of divesting the others, works for himself with his clean, honest hands to earn and then also to share, not out of patronage, but because this is how he is to be redeemed in spirit. That there is no parasitic class, no beggar, no prostitute amongst the Sikh society consisting mostly of the middle, not lower or upper middle classes, is a fitting testimony to the secular ideals of Guru Gobind Singh. And that's what also makes it so effectively democratic, that no one, not even the Guru, could escape being bruised if he transgressed the limits of ethical or social behaviour set for others. When once, the Guru *salaamed* with his arrow the grave of Saint Dadu, the Sikhs atonce held the reins of his horse and wanted an answer for it. The Guru smiled and said, "I am glad you have become that adult. I should now be forgiven for having transgressed my own code of conduct, namely, that a Sikh

shall rever no one but the one God, and believe in superstition of no kind whatsoever." (*prem sumarg*)

In one of his writings the Guru says : "A king must apply the same laws to himself as he does to others."

Not for nothing had he declared : "It is ye, O people, who have exalted me, else there were million like me wandering luckless and friendless." And did he not himself submit to the dictates of the five of his followers who ordered him "as his Guru" to quit the fortress of Chamkaur when his life was in danger ? And, again, was it not he who asked to be initiated into the fold of the Khalsa the same way as he had himself initiated his followers ? Later also, the same spirit pervaded the Sikh people. Ranjit Singh's offerings were rejected at the Akal Takht by the Nihangs, led by Phula Singh, the Akali, on the charge that the Sikh ruler had, once transgressed the moral code of the Khalsa by succumbing to the charms of a dancing girl !

It has seldom occurred in the spiritual history of man that the pontiff of an order should utter : "He who calleth me God will forsure burn in the fires of hell. I'm but a slave of the Supreme Being come to witness His play." He never recommends his path to be the only one for salvation, and, like Guru Amar Das, his predecessor, who had said, "O God, save man through whichever door he cometh to you," Guru Gobind Singh also called God, "the God of no-religion." For, once you identify God with a particular creed, the others become strangers to Him. He, thus, becomes something other than a universal God, or the God of the whole humankind.

It will be of interest to note that not once in the *Ādi Granth*, did any Guru, from Nanak to Tegh Bahadur, so much as mention the name of the Punjab. They have mentioned every other part of India, and the entity called "Hindustan" (which, in their days, in the minds of many didn't conjure up any emotion, national or otherwise, except those which a mere geographical expression can generate), but the Punjab never. Guru Gobind Singh too, in one of his *Hukamnamahas* (Letters) to the *Sangat* of Decca, call Bengal his

“spiritual home”. Thus, his outlook was never provincial, but national (I should have said, supra-national). Again, the Gurus wrote not merely in Punjabi, their mother tongue, but more often in a mixed generic language, called *Sadhu Bhasa*, and Guru Gobind Singh wrote mostly in Braj, and occasionally also in Persian, though when he (like his predecessors) wrote in Punjabi, there’s no one to beat him in the choice of diction, metre or indigenous metaphors etc. And they denounced, also, the exclusiveness either in economic station, caste, colour, or creed which were then, the main dividing lines for men not only in our sub-continent but even beyond, and still express themselves either in class struggle, or racial wars, economic sanctions or colour consciousness. It is to the eternal glory of Guru Gobind Singh that he cut across all such barriers, and dealt with man only as man.

In his poetry, he calls God, Bhagauti, or the Eternal Sword, and reverts Him variously as a discus, a spear, the holder of the mace, the arrow and the musket, the napier and the gun, who is terrible and brave, the destroyer and the saviour. Yet, his God is also forgiving and graceful, the overpowering beauty, the moon of moons, the utterly detached yogi. So that the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh would be such that even when he wars, he does so only to ensure peace, that he fights to wrest power from evil hands, for the sake and in the name of the powerless, but never for the sake of power, to overpower others. In his inner core, he keeps withdrawn and detached like his God to whom he is to remain eternally attuned. “The Khalsa belongs to God”, said the Guru, “so every victory, in every field, also, must belong to God”, and be exploited only for His causes, which are indeed, identical with the needs and aspirations of the whole mankind at all times.

And, what is it out of whom the Guru built the formidable Khalsa, who even though limited in numbers, has remained, ever since, in the forefront of the struggle for man’s emancipation in this sub-continent, after about a thousand years of its humiliation and slavery? This stuff was the outcastes, the down-trodden, the neglected of society, the peasants, the shopkeepers, the untouchables, the lowly and the lost...“My God listeneth to the wails of the ant first, and,

thereafter of the elephant", says Guru Gobind. It is out of these little sparrows that the Guru moulded his hawks, his death-daring warriors. And, as Vivekananda has pointed out, such examples as that of Guru Gobind Singh are, indeed, very rare where Hindus and Muslims would have joined hands to wage a war for liberation under a common banner. The present-day India owes much to the teachings and examples of Guru Gobind Singh in building a modern humanistic society, in which not merely opportunities are equal, but the man, individually, is also free to keep his conscience and to rebel if his internal autonomy is attacked. This is what distinguishes the idea of Guru Gobind Singh from Lenin's. The individual exists for the society, but the society must also exist for a supra-mundane ideal, that is, the universal spiritual flowering in God, and must, instead of shackling man's soul in exchange for bread, allow it every opportunity to liberate, deepen and enrich it, so that the infinite human possibilities are not thwarted, being tied down only to his physical hungers and wants.

To sum up, the Guru's ideal society would be a society of working men and women, peaceable and holy, shorn of superstition and distinctions of every kind, equal in every way, with eternal and absolute values as their guidelines, both individually and collectively, with an open diplomacy and animated on spirit of sacrifice, but not of adventurism, and wedded to the use of arms when all other avenues for the redressal of wrongs are totally and irrevocably exhausted." But, both the individual and the society exist to transform men into supermen, and for this whatever shackles bind their individual liberty, as is expressed through their individual conscience, must be rejected out of hand. But this trait has not been an unmixed blessing. Whereas the Sikhs, individually, have made their marks in every walk of life, and led their compatriots in affluence and rich living through hard work, daring and self-sacrifice, besides cultural and spiritual attainments, as a socio-political group, they have not, except for a brief period after the Gurus, thrown up a leadership which could meet the challenge of the times. Is it merely on account of the superimposition of the religious upon the secular, or is it a tribal character inherent in the people who constituted, and still do, the majority of the Sikh-Khalsa ?\*\*

- \*\* Guru Gobind Singh has often been compared to Shivaji. But the latter could never cut through the hierarchy of caste. The Brahmins stuck to their dominant positions in state affairs, and would not coronate even Shivaji, till he had after months of alms-giving and performance of fixed ritual, expiated for the "sin" of his lowly birth. Again, Shivaji's diplomacy and system of warfare were never open. His movement, moreover, assumed an anti-Muslim stance and as J. N. Sarkar has remarked, the Maratha regime did not leave their country any richer for their contribution to art, architecture, or literature, or a system of administration or husbanding of finance, even though they fired, as did the defiance of Rana Pratap, the Hindus' imagination everywhere for freedom from political subjugation, even if to relapse, again into caste and tribal rivalries. This is, however not to extol the Sikhs as against these other two known warrior races of India. The point here sought to be emphasised is that Guru Gobind Singh's movement of the Khalsa was not merely an accident of history but something more enduring and comprehensive in its ideals, howsoever the Sikhs practice may have deviated from them in the course of centuries.

## POLITICAL IDEAS OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

J. S. Bains

THE Sikh religion as conceived by its founder, Guru Nanak, and propounded and preached by the later gurus is a thoroughly practicable and useful code of conduct. It aims at the spiritual and moral improvement of the individual and also the society in which the latter lives in. Besides, its emphasis on the acceptance of one almighty God as the mover of things, cherishes the inculcation of ethical virtues and moral living and looks with disdain on those who equate religious living with a life of renunciation. The Sikh view of life, therefore, partakes of the activities of the individual and society as amenable to religious influence and as capable of having impact on the social, political and economic affairs of men.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike his predecessors Guru Gobind Singh lived a very active life. Ever since he was designated as the Guru at the tender age of 8 to the period of his death at 41, he came into continuous conflict with the existing social and political order and had even to wage war against the Hindu as well as the Mughal rulers. In order to vindicate his views on many of these matters, he organised the *Khalsa* and attempted to put his ideals into practice. He was an extremely well read man and many of his observations on the then existing political order provide us with a wealth of material which may be useful to students of political theory. Besides, an understanding of the same may also help in adequately coming to

1. Teja Singh, *Sikhism: Its Ideals and Institutions*; M. Macauliffe, Wilson and others, *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium* (Calcutta, 1958); J. S. Bains, 'Political Ideas of Guru Nanak,' *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. XXIII (1962), p. 309-18.



grips with the problems of national life and also those of the world community.<sup>2</sup>

### POLITICAL AUTHORITY

In conformity with the teachings of Guru Nanak<sup>3</sup>, the Tenth Guru had argued that authority in every sphere ultimately derives its validity from God and not from any human source. In this sense he agreed with the early Christian thinkers who were of the view that the secular as well as the spiritual develops from the same source. In the *Zafar Nāma* which was addressed to Aurangzeb, the Guru had mentioned that the God is the true emperor of earth and heaven and that He is the master of both the worlds.<sup>4</sup> He dilated on this point with more clarity when he said :<sup>5</sup>

The successors of both Baba Nanak and Babar  
were created by God Himself.  
Recognize the former as a spiritual,  
And the latter as a temporal king.

A similar idea was portrayed by him when he uttered the following words :<sup>6</sup>

By his (God's) *hukum* are all things formed,  
Not one is blessed, save by his *hukum*, and  
by his *hukum* alone nature doth run her course,  
All serve beneath his *hukum*, and none may act  
without it,

2. For a historical background see the scholarly work of Indubhushan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa* ( Calcutta, 1947 ), Vol. II, p. 64-91.
3. Bains, J. S., op. cit. p. 310-11.
4. Quoted in Macauliffe, Max Arthur, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. V, p. 204.  
Also *Sawaiya*. 8 : "Oh eternal and everlasting God ! It is Thou who caused the Vedas and the Katabas (Semitic books) to come into existence. It is Thou who hath given the Gods, the demons and the good earthly spirits, their proper places and assigned proper functions to them in the past and in the present." Quoted in *The Sikh Review*, January 1963, p. 42.
5. Macauliffe, Max Arthur, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol V, p. 305.
6. Quoted in John Clark Archer, *The Sikhs*, p. 210.

Under Thy *hukum*, O God, hath all been done,  
and naught is of itself alone.'

At another time while relating the story of how the Bedis had lost their dominion, he said :<sup>7</sup>

'Afterwards again quarrels increasing among the Bedis,  
Which no one could adjust.  
It was the will of God  
That sovereignty should pass from their family.'

From the above it follows that Guru Gobind Singh believed in the divine origin of authority. But he had sufficiently made it clear that while the person in authority exercises this power as a mandate from God, in order that he may continue to enjoy this boon, he must always act according to the dictates of God. If he does not abide by the God's mandate ; if he annoys the weak ; if he plunders the people ; if he engages in activities prejudicial to general welfare ; if he puts the fulfilment of material pleasures as the prime motive of life and if he digresses from religious and moral teachings and from the principles of abstract justice, he incurs the wrath of God who may then deprive him of his position and bestow the same on some one else.<sup>8</sup> The Guru had made it clear in unmistakable terms that a secular ruler must always be responsible to God for all his activities. Condemning the religious bigotry and political intolerance of Aurangzeb as inconsistent with divine mandate, he said :<sup>9</sup> "Smite not any one mercilessly with the sword,

7. Macauliffe, Max Arthur, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. V, p. 294.

Also : ' Countless heroes very valiant without hesitation face  
the edge of the swords,  
Subdue countries, crush rebels, and the pride of  
furious elephants.  
Break powerful forts and even without fighting  
conquer in every direction.  
But their efforts avail not ; the Lord is the Commander  
of them all—the suppliants are many while there  
is but one Giver.' *Ibid.* p. 265.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

Also Gurnam Singh, *A Unilingual Punjabi State and the Sikh Unrest*, p. 10-11.

9. Macauliffe, Max Arthur, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. V, p. 204.

Also : "Even though thou art strong, annoy not the weak. Lay not the  
axe to thy kingdom. When God is a friend what can an enemy do though

or a sword from the high shall smite thyself. O Man, be not reckless, fear God, he cannot be flattered or praised. The King of Kings is without fear. He is the true Emperor of earth and heaven. God is the master of both worlds. He is the creator of all animals from the feeble ant to the powerful elephant. He is the Protector of the miserable and Destroyer of the reckless. His name is the Support of the unhappy. It is He who showeth man the way he ought to go."

In this context he questioned the much held view that Aurangzeb was a religious man. While he praised the latter for many of his attributes and distinctive achievements, he found that his policies were too communal, and in any case were contrary to the principles of religion in its ideal sense. In the *Zafar Nāma*, the Guru said: "God will grant thee the fruit of the evil deed thou designed—I do not deem thou knowest God, since thou hast done acts of oppression."<sup>10</sup> Pointing out to Aurangzeb, he added<sup>11</sup>: Did I not know that thou O faithless man, wert a worshipper of wealth and perjurer? Thou keepest no faith and observest no religion. Thou knowest not God and believest not in Muhammad. He who hath regard for his religion never swerveth from his promise. Thou hast no idea of what an oath on the Qurān is and canst have no belief in Divine providence."

The threat to political authority would not arise so long as the person concerned exercised it for the betterment of his subjects and is not entangled in the worldly pleasures. Like Aristotle, the Guru referred to many forces which serve as a basis of dissension. He gave a prominent place to desire for wealth, land and women as the main causes of dissension among people. Similarly he also mentioned that pride, worldly love, lust and wrath also contribute to this process. Talking about the Sodhi race to which his forefathers belonged, he said<sup>12</sup>:

he multiply himself a hundred times? If an enemy practises enmity a thousand times, he cannot, as long as God is a friend, injure even a hair of one's head." *Ibid.*, p. 206.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

12. *Vichitra Natak in the Sikh Religion*, p. 292.

Afterwards dissension arose among them,  
 And no holy man could arrest its progress.  
 Heroes and invincible warriors went about caprisoned,  
 Took arms and went to fight in the field of battle.  
 For wealth and laud ancient is the struggle,  
 To compass which men willingly die.  
 Worldly love and pride have extended quarrels,  
 Lust and wrath have conquered the whole world."

The emphasis on God as the ordainer of life and as the bestower of office should not give one the impression that Guru Gobind Singh accepted the sanctity of any existing political authority on the plea that it must have been ordained by God. In this sense any person who questions the validity of title to such authority would be questioning the mandate of God. It is true that Guru had mentioned that at times God may even give a tyrant to the people as a punishment for their wicked actions. But he had no doubt in his mind that God's mandate could be known by the people. "When one's own will is attuned to His Supreme Will then one feels and move."<sup>13</sup> People who have a pure and clean heart and are moved by the love of God are always in a position to distinguish between good and evil and can, therefore, decide to support or oppose the incumbents of the office.<sup>14</sup> In other words the Guru was of the view that public opinion on a particular matter must be considered as the pointer and the political authority must conform to the will of the

Also : "No body can compute the time  
 When enmity, dissension and pride were diffused.  
 In this world their basis is greed,  
 By the desire for which very one killeth himself."

13. Teja Singh, *op.cit*, p. 13.

14. "The Panth, the Khalsa, I formed and helped it grow,  
 For the eternal Father had ordained it so  
 Hear ye all my Sikhs, the Father's behest for future,  
 From today the *Granth*, the Divine Word is the Master !  
 The Guru Granth Sahib is the embodiment in visible form  
 of all the Gurus,  
 With a heart, pure and clean, with a faith unbounded and serene,  
 Let the Khalsa seek the Master in His Word ;  
 For the Word, the *Granth*, is the Guru, the Master from today "

people. It means that rulers must always be responsible to the ruled just as the leaders must always personify the aspiration of the led. That is why the Guru held the *Khalsa* and the Sikhs at large in high esteem. The Guru had mentioned that while the "Guru's sovereignty is full of twenty measures, that of the *sangat*, as the mouth-piece of the people, is of overriding paramountcy, of twenty-one measures."<sup>15</sup> He had also pointed out that God would always be present in the general body of the *Khalsa*, and that wherever even five Sikhs were assembled, the God would be with them.<sup>16</sup>

In this connection it is of importance to note that the Guru gave the pride of place to the *sangat* or the Sikh brotherhood and gave them all the credit for his achievements. To Kesho who had deprecated the Sikhs, the Guru had said<sup>17</sup> :

All my battles I have won against tyranny  
I have fought with the devoted backing of these people ;  
Through them only have I been able to bestow gifts,  
Through their help I have escaped from harm ;  
The love and generosity of these Sikhs  
Have enriched my heart and home.  
Through their grace I have attained all learning ;  
Through their help, in battle, I have slain all my enemies  
I was born to serve them, through them I reached eminence.  
What would I have been without their kind and ready help  
There are millions of insignificant people like me ?"

Similarly he emphasized that the true service is the service of the common people<sup>18</sup> :

True service is the service of these people :  
I am not inclined to serve others of higher castes ;  
Charity will bear fruit, in this and in the next world,  
If given to such worthy people as these.  
All other sacrifices and charities are profitless.

15. Quoted in Kapur Singh, *Parasharprasna*, p. 325, F No. 19.

16. Gokul Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 83 ; Banerjee, *op.cit.*, p. 119-20.

17. *The Sikh Review*, January 1963, p. 16.

18. *Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, p. 272.

From top to toe, whatever I call my own,  
All I possess or carry, I dedicate to these people

His veneration for the Sikhs was so much that he bowed before them and paid fine when they objected to his saluting the shrine of Dadu about which he had previously given them strict instructions.<sup>19</sup> The classic example of the high esteem in which he held the Sikhs was when after selecting the "five loved ones," he drank the holy water at their hands and thereby gave the Khalsa the pride of having selected their leader. This emphasis on popular basis of sovereignty and its equation with divine mandate was a unique idea and may be considered as a distinct contribution to democratic theory.<sup>20</sup>

#### OPPOSITION TO ESTABLISHED AUTHORITY

A unique contribution of Guru Gobind Singh in the realm of political process was to organize his followers into a militant group in order that they may be able to withstand and counter the oppressive policies of the government of the day. Guru Nanak and the later gurus had operated purely at the social plane. Though their such activities invited the displeasure of the orthodox segments of society, they very seldom came into violent conflict with established authority. They preferred to use the method of the dialectic to expose the fallacies of the prevalent customs and traditions and won followers thereby. While such a method had its own charm and it bore dividends, incidents had occurred in which the ruling authorities had

19. Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

20. Kapoor Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

The author has explained the relevant terms as follows: (1) The *sangat* means the local folk assembly of direct representation. (2) The *panth* is the whole commonwealth represented by the people's assembly of indirect representation. (3) The *khalsa* postulates the *suiveris*, inalienable sovereignty of the people. (4) The condominium of *Guru Granth* and *Panth* implies that the exercise of power is always subject to bonafides and good conscience. (5) The *panjpiyaras* is the doctrine of collegial leadership in the direction of state policies. (6) The *gurmata* is the symbol and form of the supreme authority of the collective will of the people duly formulated, and (7) The *sarbatt khalsa* is the doctrine of completely equalitarian free democracy. *Ibid.*, p. 328-29.

taken undue advantage of the peaceful nature of the movement and had committed atrocities on the Sikh leaders. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur on the orders of Jahangir and Aurangzeb confirmed the belief of the Tenth Guru that force must be met by force. A few years earlier, the Sixth Guru had taken steps in this direction and had used the sword against the secular authorities. While Guru Gobind Singh favoured peaceful means in order to resolve conflicts and had advised the people to be loyal to their sovereign, he advocated the use of extreme means in order to vindicate one's own cause. This approach is quite evident from the following which is a part of a letter which he had written to Aurangzeb<sup>21</sup> :

When all other means have proven ineffective  
It is right then to take up the sword.

The Guru was of the opinion that the peaceful approach can bear fruit only if the opponent has also some scruples and is influenced by religious and ethical values. If he did not have any regard for such values, the only remedy would be to oppose him tooth and nail. The Guru arrived at this conclusion after observing the treatment which was being meted out to the people in his own days and which he thought was contrary to all canons of morality and justice. In conformity with this view, he did not accept the proposition of a follower of Dadu that "if any one throws a clod or a brick at thee, lift it on thy head." Instead he said : "If any one throws a clod or a brick at thee, angrily strike him with stone."<sup>22</sup> Similarly he interpreted the request of the hill Rajas to borrow an elephant as a pressure tactic and told his mother who had intervened on their behalf<sup>23</sup> : "The hillmen have now come to beg with the humility of goats, but when they have received what they have asked for, they will assume the bravery of tigers. Mother dear, if we betray fear of them, they will soon be ready to devour us. They will only respect us when we show them the sword. If thou show a stick to a barking dog, he will fear to continue his barking—."

21. *Zafarnama*, quoted in Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

22. Quoted in Macauliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

Similarly he said the following to the Prime Minister of Raja Bhim Chand who had come to seek the Guru's help against the Mughals<sup>24</sup> :  
 "Pay no tribute to the Turks. If thou pay it today, there will be another demand on thee tomorrow. But if thou fight and cause the Turks to retreat, then shall no one molest thee."

### SWORD SUPREME

Guru Gobind Singh advocated the use of force only as a measure of last resort. He found that the Sikhs had suffered a lot at the hands of the Mughals. That is why he reached the conclusion that the time had come when they should prepare themselves for effective opposition to established authority. In order to achieve these goals he substituted the old ideals of humility and surrender practiced by Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur to ones of self-assertion and self-reliance. The Guru was engaged the whole of his life in active military operations, first against the hindu rajas and later against the mughal armed forces. He was convinced that force must be met by force. That is why he almost deified the sword. In *Vichitra Natak* he has at many places given even the status of God to sword and had invoked its blessings and urged upon his followers to worship it. The supreme importance which he gave to the sword is clear from the following description<sup>25</sup> :

Sword, that smiteth in a flash,  
 That scatters the armies of the wicked  
 in the great battle field ;  
 O thou symbol of the brave,  
 Thine arm is irresistible, thy brightness shineth forth  
 The blaze of the splendour dazzling like the sun.  
 Sword thou art the protector of the saints ;  
 Thou art the scourge of the wicked ;  
 Scatterer of sinners I take refuge in Thee.  
 Hail to the Creator, Saviour and Sustainer,  
 Hail to Thee ; Sword Supreme.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

25. *Sacred Writings of the Sikhs, op.cit.*, p. 270.



Similarly he held the wielder of the sword in high esteem.<sup>26</sup>

O bow to the scimitar, the two-edged sword, the  
falchion, and the dagger.  
Thou, O God, hast ever one form ; Thou art ever  
unchargeable.  
I bow to the holder of the mace  
Who diffused light through the fourteen worlds.  
I bow to the arrow and the musket,  
I bow to the sword, spotless, fearless, and unbreakable,  
I bow to the powerful mace and lance  
To which nothing is equal.  
I bow to him who holdeth the discuss,  
Who is not made of the elements and who is terrible.  
I bow to him with the strong teeth ,  
I bow to him who is supremely powerful,  
I bow to the arrow and the cannon  
Which destroy the enemy.  
I bow to the sword and the rapier  
which destroy the evil.  
I bow to all weapons called *shaster* (which may be held)  
I bow to all weapons called *aster* (which may be hurled or  
discharged).

In this connection it is of interest to note that the Guru introduced the Sikh prayer with an invocation to the sword : "Having first remembered the sword, meditate on Guru Nanak." Similarly he brought home to the Saiyid of Sarhind the importance of the sword. The latter had asked the Guru about the miracles. The Guru drew forth a gold coin and said that it was a miracle because everything could be purchased with it. On Saiyid's enquiry whether he could mention any other miracle, the Guru drew forth his sword and said that it was also a miracle : "It could cut off heads and confer thrones and empires upon those who wield it with dexterity."<sup>27</sup>

In the same strain after the Goddess Durgā had failed to appear and the Guru thereby had exposed the claims of Kesho, the former

26. Quoted in Macauliffe, op. cit, p 286-87

27. Ibid., p. 232.

set out for Anandpur. In reply to the people who enquired from him about the appearance of Durga, the Guru is said to have raised his sword aloft to say that by God's assistance, his sword would perform the deeds which the Brahmins attributed to Durga.<sup>28</sup>

The veneration in which the Guru held the sword, should not give one the impression that Guru Gobind Singh believed in the dictum that might is right. The use of the word sword interchangeably with God<sup>29</sup> is apparently based on the assumption that the wielder of sword must be imbued with the divine mission. It must be used for the furtherance of righteous acts and for the suppression of wicked people. The sword used for such purposes signifies divine beneficence, but if it is used for oppressing the people and for the love of power, it loses all significance.<sup>30</sup> The Guru had sought the attainment of divine *shakti* so that he might be able to use the sword for furthering

28. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

29. For various examples where the Guru had used the word sword interchangeably with God, see Dharam Pal Ashta, *The Poetry of the Dasam Granth*, p. 183-86.

30. For ideal meanings of the sword see, Kapur Singh, *op cit*, p. 138-41 :

(1) It means a weapon which cuts at the very roots of the *avidya*, nescience that separates the transient, puny, individual self from the abiding, immortal, Universal Self. It is symbolic of the transcendental knowledge, the *Brahmanan*, which destroys the illusion of the temporalia, the word of time and space, and leads to the life everlasting. It is symbolic of the Guru himself who is the destroyer of ignorance.

(2) The second meaning of this symbol is that the Sikh way of life is wholly governed by ethical principles, and it constitutes an intelligent, aggressive and useful citizenship of the world and not a slavish, conformist and self-centred social existence

(3) It is, by ancient tradition and association, a typical weapon of offence and defence and hence a fundamental right to wear, of the free man, a sovereign individual. The measure of freedom to possess and wear arms by an individual is the precise measure of his freedom and sovereignty. Since a member of the Khalsa Brotherhood is pledged not to accept any alien restrictions on his civic freedom, he is enjoined to insist on, and struggle for, his unrestricted right to wear and possess arms of offence and defence.

righteousness. He had sought the blessings of the *shakti* for this purpose :<sup>31</sup>

Grant me this boon O God, from Thy Greatness,  
May I never restrain from righteous acts ;  
May I fight without fear all foes in life's battle,  
With confidence courage claiming the victory !  
May my highest ambition be singing Thy praises,  
And may Thy glory be grained in my mind !  
When this mortal life reaches its limits,  
May I die fighting with limitless courage !

It is in the above sense that the slogan of the Sword Supreme is relevant. Its significance lies in the fact that a person who wields the sword for the good of humanity puts the divine mandate into practice.

In this context it is of interest to note that the Guru firmly believed in combining spiritual achievements with physical prowess. He was of the opinion that the one without the other may lead to sheer hypocrisy or ruthless tyranny. That is why he advocated that spiritual uplift must be combined with Kshatriya spirit of valour. In order to achieve this goal he popularized heroic literature from the glorious past. He wrote poetry for the purpose of inspiring bravery and for inciting the people to revolt against tyranny. He also employed a host of poets and pandits who translated stirring stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to infuse war-like spirit among the followers. He also made arrangements to produce drums, kettle drums,

31. Epilogue to Chandi Chariter, in *Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, op. Cit. p. 274.

Also : "I am the son of a brave man, not of a Brahmin ;  
How can I perform austerities ?  
How can I turn my attention to Thee, O God, and forsake  
domestic affairs ?  
Now be pleased to grant me the boon I crave with clasped  
hands,  
That when the end of my life cometh, I may die fighting  
in a mighty battle."

Quoted in Banerjee, op. cit, p. 117.

conch-shells by which martial music was produced<sup>32</sup> and popularised the singing of *Maru Rag*. He also encouraged the manufacture of muskets, swords and arrows and urged upon his disciples who came to see him to bring offensive and defensive weapons as offerings. The Guru took delight in wearing arms and uniform. He also instituted the custom of baptism by sweet water stirred with the double-edged sword thus signifying bravery and skill in arms as the essential attribute of a Sikh. It was with the same idea in mind that the Guru changed the name of his followers into *singhs*, making them lions.<sup>33</sup>

The Guru extended this programme to the children also. Like Plato, he wanted to imbibe the children from their very infancy with love for God and for martial exercises. The Guru used to take Zorawar Singh in his lap while watching Ajit Singh fence. Similarly Jhujhar Singh used to be brought by his nurse to witness the performance.<sup>34</sup> It was in fulfilment of the same idea that the Guru named the sons of Sikhs as *Bhujhangis*, that is, offsprings of snakes. The Guru was convinced that the people must develop their physical and mental faculties so that they may attain perfection and play a positive role in the affairs of the community.<sup>35</sup>

### IDEAL PEOPLE

The Tenth Guru was not happy with the caste-ridden Hindu society and the fanatical attitude of the *mullāhs* and others who held the non-muslims as *kāfirs*. He was of the view that human being is essentially the same, whatever religion, race, colour or creed he may belong to. Like the stoics he held that all human beings belong to the same species and are equal before the eyes of God. This emphasis on the brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God was clearly portrayed by him in the following words<sup>36</sup> :

32. The drum was also the symbol of sovereignty. Macauliffe, *op. cit.* p. 6.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 83, 93, 126.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

35. Teja Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

36. 'Akal Ustat', 16, 86 in *Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

He is also in the temple as He is in the mosque :  
 He is in the Hindu worship as He is in the Muslim prayer ;  
 Men are one though they appear different,  
 The Hindus and the Muslims are all one.  
 Each have the habits of a different environment,  
 But all men have the same eyes, the same body,  
 The same form compounded of the same four elements,  
 Earth, air, fire, and water.  
 Thus the Abhekh of the Hindus and the Allah of the Muslims  
are one,  
 The Qurān and the Purān praise the same Lord.  
 They are all of one form,  
 The One Lord made them all.

It is clear from the above that Guru Gobind Singh did not see any difference among men. He believed that man is an emanation from God who had given the same senses and the same soul to every one. He was of the view that different customs and habits were the product of a different environment in which people lived and not because they were different from each other. Moreover in the eyes of God, every body has an equal status, no matter that they have a different social status. The Guru, therefore, viewed the whole humanity as one.<sup>37</sup>

The idea of brotherhood of man helped the exploited and weaker sections of the community to assert themselves. It also gave a

Also : "One man by shaving his head  
 Hopes to become a holy monk,  
 Another sets up as a yogi  
 Or some other kind of ascetic.  
 Some call themselves Hindus :  
 Others call themselves Musulmans.  
 Among these are the Shiahs,  
 There are Sunis also,  
 And yet man is of one race in all the world  
 God as Creator and God as Good.  
 God in His Bounty and God in His Mercy,  
 Is all one God. Even in our errors,  
 We should not separate God from God !  
 Worship the One God,  
 For all men the One Divine Teacher,  
 All men have the same form,  
 All men have the same soul."

*Ibid.*, p. 268.

37. Kapur Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 39, 40.

stimulus to the movement for equality and for popular participation in the affairs of the community. The Guru brought home to the people that to be useful citizens they must assert their rights. In order to wield effective power, they must organize themselves because only through proper organization, they could make their presence felt. Moreover they must have common goals which should keep them united.

Guru Gobind Singh laid a good deal of emphasis on honest living. He was of the opinion that a householder who lived honestly, earned his bread by the sweat of his own brow, gave charity and believed in God, helped in raising secular life to a higher pedestal. The Guru wanted to have no truck with those who under the garb of saintliness exploited the people. This applied to the Masands,<sup>38</sup> the Brahmins and the Mullahs.<sup>39</sup> More than that it applied to the political rulers. An ideal ruler, whatever his station in the hierarchy, must be an embodiment of virtue, believer in the Almighty and the

38. About the Masands he said :

"If any one go to the masands, they will tell him to bring all his property  
at once and give it to them.  
If any one serve the masands, they will say, Fetch and give us all thine  
offerings.  
Go at once and make a present to us of whatever property is in thy house !  
Think on us night and day, and mention not others even by mistake !  
'They put oil into their eyes to make people believe that they are shedding  
tears.  
If they see any of their own worshippers wealth, they serve up sacred food  
and feed him with it.  
If they see him without wealth, they give him nothing, though he beg for it ;  
they will not even show him their faces.  
These beasts plunder men, and never sing the praises of the Supreme Being."

Quoted in Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

39. "What does it profit you to close both eyes,  
And to sit like a crane in false meditation !  
For you who go about bathing in the seven seas  
To show your holiness,  
This world is lost and the next world also !  
You have passed your lives vainly in the company of sinner !  
Hear me, ye people ! Hear the Truth !  
They that truly love God,  
They alone shall meet Him."

'Akal Ustat', 9, 29 in *Sacred Writings of the Sikh*, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

protector of the innocent, weak and the righteous. He must not lose faith in God even in the greatest calamity.<sup>40</sup> The Guru made a scathing criticism of those who in order to realize their selfish ambitions, mislead their higher officers. Moreover those who flatter the men in authority and thereby maintain their own positions are also the enemies of the people. Similarly the leaders should be the real servants of the people and should not exploit them for their own personal ends.<sup>41</sup> They should have the courage of conviction and should not change their opinion and beliefs through fear of men or governments.<sup>42</sup> The Guru was a perfect example of a selfless leader, admirer of ordinary and poor people, imbued with a divine zeal and ever willing to make sacrifices for the common good.

### CONCLUSION

Guru Gobind Singh believed that all authority, secular as well as spiritual, flows from God who is omnipotent and the final determinant of all things. But he did not concede the doctrine of divine right of authority as had been claimed by some of the despotic rulers. If a ruler strayed away from the divine mandate, if he engaged himself in the satisfaction of earthly pleasures and indulged in selfishness, greed and favouritism and if he alienates the sympathies of the people by resorting to acts of high-handedness, injustice and coercion, he loses the mandate of God and such a person must be thrown out even if by force. Moreover the rulers must always be responsible to the ruled because the God's will manifests itself through the will of the people.

The Guru stressed the spiritual and physical improvement of the individuals. He was the first Indian leader who advocated equality, fraternity and democracy and stood for basing all human activity: political, economic and social, on ethical and spiritual foundations.

40. 'Sabad Hazare 6,' *The Spokesman*, Guru Gobind Singh Number 1952, p. 12.

41. 'Vichitra Natak', in *Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, op. cit. p. 270.

42. Kapur Singh, op. cit, p. 281-82.

## SOCIO-RELIGIOUS IDEALS OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

**Kirpal Singh Narang**

ONE of the contemporaries of Guru Gobind Singh, Bhai Nand Lal, described him as *Mard-i-Kamal*, i.e., the Perfect Man. Guru Gobind Singh in his autobiography *Vichitra Natak* (Wonderous Drama), says that he came as "a commissioned emissary" of the Lord to play a specific role assigned by Him. Bhai Gurdas (the second) says that Guru Gobind Singh "moulded in the image of God, appeared in the world as a warrior." The deeper one studies the main events of the Guru's life on this planet, the more convinced one feels about the epithet struck by Bhai Nand Lal. The Guru in his writings says emphatically that he should not be called God, for God, positively, is "without form, colour and outline." But then, would it be correct to call him a human being? For that, we must find the answer in history. Is it possible to expect from a mortal the things which the Guru did? The catalogue of his achievements is indeed too vast and astounding to allow much room for doubt or scepticism. This story of unparalleled sacrifice begins at the age of nine, and traversing a flaming course which involved the martyrdom of his father and all his four sons ends at the age of 42. In a short but crowded span of life, he had changed the character and destiny of a whole people. The meek, lowly and pusillanimous serfs were transformed into invincible warriors and invested with dignity and dream. Assuredly, here the human form was only a corporeal proof of the divine spirit operating in the temporal world. Such indeed are the marks of the 'perfect man.' A more felicitous and apt expression in regard to Guru Gobind Singh would be hard to come by.

Before him, there had been a very large number of saints, religious teachers and founders of sects, but none of them laid so much stress on the philosophy of action or exhorted his followers



so forcefully to translate the cardinal principles of religion into their day-to-day lives as was done by Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru taught that religion is 'a way of life.' It is neither a set of dogmas, beliefs or rituals, nor an academic probe or enquiry into the unknown. Religion, according to him, was the noblest life lived among one's fellow beings. Life enlivened by religion, with purity, love, service and sacrifice as its goals, was real life; the rest was all unreal. How apt do the following words of Huston Smith appear when one regards this aspect of Guru Gobind Singh.

"Wherever religion comes to life, it displays a startling quality : it takes over. All else while not silenced becomes subdued and thrown without contest into a supporting role.

"Religion alone confronts the individual with the most momentous option this world can present. It calls the soul to the highest adventure it can undertake, a proposed journey across the jungles, peaks and deserts of the human spirit. The call is to confront reality, to master the self. Those who dare to hear and follow this secret call soon learn the dangers and difficulties of its lonely journey.

A sharpened edge of a razor, hard to traverse,  
A difficult path is this—the poets declare !"

Guru Gobind Singh brought religion to life. Gordon in his *Sikhs* says that the tenth guru created such a religious revolution in the social set-up of those days that the dry bones of an oppressed peasantry were stirred into life. It gave his followers a distinct national character in opposition to the ways of other people. It aroused a new sense of purpose and gave a new direction to faith.

Guru Gobind Singh exhorted his country-men to a life of significant endeavour. There should be, he reiterated, no gulf between words and deeds. The two were aspects of the same dialectical reality. From the very beginning of his career, we find Guru Gobind Singh following this line of action. When the Kashmiri Brahmans, representing the elite of Hindu orthodoxy, came to Anandpur Sahib

(city of bliss) to plead with Guru Teg Bahadur that he alone could save Hinduism, the compassionate pontiff was set thinking. Guru Gobind Singh, then a child of nine, happened to be there. He asked him why he looked so deeply preoccupied. "Dharma is at stake," said the ninth guru, "The oppression of humanity has reached the limit. Some truly worthy person should come forward to lay down his life to rid the earth of this burden." "None could be worthier than yourself for such a noble act," remarked Guru Gobind Singh in his innocent manner. The winged words went home. There could be no choice thereafter. A child's answer helped steel the resolve to court death and thus vindicate truth and justice.

Similarly, when he assumed charge of the spiritual leadership of the Sikhs at the age of nine, he pondered deep over the then-existing situation. He came to the conclusion that the Hindu religion, as it then was, could not meet the great challenge of the time. People were so much over-awed by the tyranny of the ruling class and so much bemused that they had lost faith in themselves. The priestly class and religious guides to whom they could look up for help were completely demoralised. There was none who could inspire self-reliance and faith in their inner strength. So the Guru found that although the learned Brahmans and other religious heads knew everything about religion, their *mantrās* and edicts were simply a string of empty incantations and shiboleths. Despite the fact that the Fearless Lord was with them, none had the courage to stand up for truth and justice. They had been in fact reduced to a herd of weaklings and cowards, submitting to all types of tyranny including that of the aliens. Guru Gobind Singh's heart bled when he saw that even the high priests of religion were behaving timidly and supinely. Timidity and belief in God, he held, were irreconcilable, a negation of an alive religion. Guru Gobind Singh could not remain passive under the circumstances. He told his men that it was irreligious to submit to oppression and tyranny and that it was religious "to lift the sword to fight the tyrant, provided all other means had been exhausted." Cowardice and helplessness, according to him, were the worst types of sins, and ran counter to all religious beliefs. One of his favourite couplets through which he emphasized this point runs like this :

“Sweep away the filth of timidity and  
 Cowardice from the deep recesses of your  
 mind with the broom of Divine Wisdom.”

He advocated that man should have faith in himself and faith in the Lord. In fact they go together. A couplet which is in *Ādi Granth*, and is attributed to him, reads as follows :

“When strength is there, chains are  
 loosened and every remedy and  
 expedient comes handy.”

For an enlightened and self-respecting man, he held, it was essential that he has faith in the Lord. And faith which does not bring strength and courage, and is not tuned to the service of humanity is no faith at all. The ultimate goal of true faith was the complete sacrifice of one's self for the greater good. Perhaps Tagore drew inspiration from the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh when he wrote the following poem :

“This is my prayer to Thee, my Lord, strike at  
 the root of penury in my heart ;  
 Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys  
 and sorrows ;  
 Give me the strength to make my love fruitful  
 in service ;  
 Give me the strength never to disown the poor  
 or bend my knee before insolent might ;  
 Give me the strength to raise my mind high  
 above daily trifles ;  
 And give me the strength to surrender my  
 strength to Thy will, with love.”

Guru Gobind Singh certainly strengthened the *shakti* aspect of religion, but that does not mean that he was placing any different goal before his disciples. Long before him, other Sikh gurus and men of God too had told their devotees that they could attain the highest love provided they were prepared for the highest type of sacrifice. It was Guru Nanak who had said :

“Desirest thou the game of love to play?  
Put thy head on thy palm,  
With a heart resolute and calm,  
Steadily follow me on this way.

If choosest thou this path to tread,  
Be prepared, O dear,  
Without wavering or fear,  
In perfect joy to lay down thy head.”

Kabir, the greatest of the Vaishnavite, too talked in the same strain to his votaries, as can be seen from the following couplet :

“Him alone should we deem to be truly brave,  
Who fighteth for the helpless and the weak,  
Who doth get to pieces cut and falleth dead,  
But never in flight doth safety seek.”

Guru Angad's advice to a Mughal soldier who had come to ask him for spiritual guidance was that he should do his military duty. Military virtues were also commended by Guru Arjan, proving that the *shakti* aspect of religion, in no way, ran counter to *bhakti*, particularly when one is enjoined to lead a worldly life.

All the Sikh gurus including the founder, had emphasized the futility of escape from life. In fact, the followers were exhorted to lead the life of ordinary householders and if they were God-conscious, they would be able to “live pure amidst the impurities of the world.” It is said that when Guru Nanak went to the Himalayas, he saw the yogis, engaged in various disciplines, trying to seek salvation in retirement. Through an interesting and instructive dialogue, he tried to impress on them that they should see God in man, leave the solitude of the hills and go and live among the people and share their pain and suffering. Through that alone, they would find their salvation.

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Nanak, also laid great emphasis on practical aspect of religion. He brought home to his men that they should not nurse their own souls in loneliness. Instead they

should be manly heroes, fully immersed in the affairs of the world. Their holiness should appear in the abundance of their love for God, in the utter selflessness of their life and in their firm devotion to the cause of righteousness. He created "an Order of the Purified Ones (The Khalsa) of the Wonderful Lord" who were to have faith in the Supreme Being and in none else. In a couplet, Guru Gobind Singh defines the type of faith that his Purified Ones, i.e., the Khalsa were to have :

"He who keeps alight the unquenchable torch  
of truth and never swerves from the thought  
of one God ;

He who has full love and confidence in God,  
and does not put his faith, even by mistake  
in fasting or in the graves of Muslim saints,  
Hindu crematoriums, or Yogic places of sepulchre ;  
He who only recognizes the one God and no pilgrimages,  
non-destruction of life, penances or austerities ;

And in whose heart the light of the Perfect One  
shines—he is to be recognized as a pure  
member of the Khalsa."

Everyone who was to join this order had to undergo an initiation ceremony called the 'baptism of the sword' (*khande-ki pahaul*) This baptism of the sword, however, was proclaimed and effected not only to arm his men and instil in them 'esprit de corps,' but also to completely transform their psychology, outlook on life and attitude towards their fellow beings. They were to be ever-prepared servants of the Lord, ready to dedicate their lives to the love and service of humanity, ready to fight tyranny whenever and wherever it became overt and intolerable. They were enjoined to preserve the corporate life of the community called the *Panth*. The highest ideal which the Guru placed before them was that they should merge themselves completely in the Guru, and in token thereof, they were to cut themselves off completely from the past. Accordingly, they were required to take four principal vows :

- (i) that they will have no pride of their occupation or position  
(called the *kritnash* vow)

- (ii) that they will have no pride of high birth etc. (called the *kulnash* vow)
- (iii) that they will discard all superstitions and traditional beliefs in the false *dharma*, rituals etc. (called the *dharminash* vow)
- (iv) that they will discard all old social customs and practices ; and instead fashion their lives according to the injunctions of the Guru (called the *ritinash karmnash* vow)

The method of initiation which had been hitherto current among the Hindus was the *charan pahaul*, i.e., the feet or the toes of the Guru were washed with water and the disciples were to drink a portion of it. Guru Gobind Singh revolted against such a system of initiation, as it ran counter to his fundamental ideology, i.e., nothing should be done in the name of religion wherein man may have to make a compromise with his self-respect. He, therefore, adopted an entirely new initiation ceremony.

An iron vessel filled with water and sugar cakes (*patashas*) was placed before the Guru. The water was stirred by a double-edged dagger by one of the chosen five. The sacred hymns of the gurus, namely, Japji, Anand, Jaap Sahib, Chaupai and Sawayas were recited. The water, thus prepared was named *amrit* or 'Sacred Water of Immortality.' It was sprinkled on their face and they were also given five palm fulls of it to drink.

After passing through this 'Baptism of the Sword,' the selected five of Guru Gobind Singh were termed the 'Khalsa' or 'the Purified Ones' and they were named as 'Singhs' or 'Lions.'

"The Khalsa," says Guru Gobind Singh "is my other self, in him I live and have my being." A single Sikh, a mere believer is only one, but when he takes Guru Gobind Singh into his embrace, he becomes, in the Sikh parlance, equal to one lakh and a quarter (*sava-lakh*). His nature is so reinforced in every way that, although hundreds may fall round him, he will stand as a 'garrison of the lord

of hosts.' He will keep the Guru's flag always flying. But this was not all. After he had baptised his chosen five, Guru Gobind Singh himself stood up and asked them (his five beloved ones) to initiate him in the same manner. Thus, the Guru was also administered *khande-ka-pahaul* and just as he had merged the Khalsa in the Guru, he merged the Guru also in the Khalsa; and he said this in his memorable words :

"The Khalsa is the Guru and the  
the Guru is the Khalsa."

The Guru also laid a detailed code of conduct for his purified ones, the Khalsa. They were not to indulge in caste prejudices. They were free to marry among one another without any caste consideration. Guru Gobind Singh told his men that the whole humanity was one and they must understand the cardinal principle of religion, i.e., the unity of life.

He also issued strict injunctions to his Khalsa that they should not indulge in smoking, nor have any social or matrimonial relations with smokers or with those persons who kill their daughters. They were also enjoined "not to step on the bed of another's wife even in a dream."

As regards positive injunctions, the purified ones (Khalsa) were specifically instructed to rise at dawn, bathe and recite the hymns of the gurus and have living faith in the Immortal Lord. As already stated, the Khalsa was to lose himself completely in the Guru. He was required to wipe off his past at one stroke. Guru Gobind Singh often used to say that in his treasury, one could only find 'present' and 'future,' no 'past.'

Such stimulating precepts, therefore, had the magical effect of changing the dregs of humanity into "saint-warriors" whose devotion, prowess and loyalty became the talk of posterity. Cunningham says that Guru Gobind Singh "roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty although fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak."

Guru Gobind Singh's genius comprehended both the mundane and the metaphysical. In his dialectics, there was no division between the two. Since power had to assume some palpable form to manifest itself, the primordial aspect of things could not be lost sight of. Thus, his bequest of *tri-ratnas* or the "Three Jewels" *degh*, *tegh*, *fateh*, could only be understood properly in relation to its vaster and universal ramifications. The concept of *degh* or the community kitchen, for instance, transcended its economic potential, and implied the virtues of love, compassion, charity and sacrifice. Similarly, *tegh* or the sword did not mean only physical strength, it represented moral and spiritual vitality, which alone, in the end, could stand up to tyranny and worst it. As for *fateh* or victory, it emphasized above all, faith in the power of the Supreme Lord of Creation. For the ultimate victory belongs to Him alone. All our triumphs are subsumed in the Divine Might.

This bequest is undoubtedly the greatest heritage of the Sikhs. In fact, the Sikh super-structure rests upon this ideological trinity. However, in periods of hibernation, peoples and nations tend to disregard or dissipate their legacy. But the eternal truths which these "three jewels" embody were seldom so much in need of reiteration as today. The country weakened by moral subversion within and pressurized by relentless enemies without is more than ever in search of an equation which should restore spiritual health. The factory, the shop, the office, pulpit and the field, all seem to have forfeited their "ancient dower", their true estate. Expediency has replaced truth in nearly all walks or fields of life. In such a situation, the triad of *degh*, *tegh*, *fateh* could serve as a beacon to a frustrated and troubled nation.

Some historians of great eminence like J. N. Sarkar, Farquhar and even Arnold J. Toynbee have been a little uncharitable to the Guru when assessing his work. J. N. Sarkar has stated that Guru Gobind Singh, by asking the Sikhs to fight the tyrant, "called in the human energy of the Sikhs from all other sides and made it flow in one particular channel only and converted the spiritual unity of the Sikhs into a mean of worldly success." Farquhar says "by arousing self-reliance and courage, the Khalsa certainly became strong



to resist the Mughals, but their organisation cut them off from their fellow country-men and made them practically a new caste. The transformation of the church into an army produced another evil result, living preaching ceased among the Sikhs and their religious life began to go down." Arnold J. Toynbee while referring to the so-called "totalitarian" militarism of Guru Gobind Singh talks in a similar strain when he observes : "When the Timurid Mughal empire in India collapsed....., the Sikhs were able to make themselves masters of one of the derelict provinces of this alien universal State into which a distracted Hindu world had been momentarily gathered together by the labours of Akbar and his successors ; but in the act of achieving this vulgar worldly ambition the Sikhs were at the same time depriving the syncretistic Hindu-Muslim faith which they had inherited from their forefathers of any prospect which it might once had of becoming the universal church of a Hindu society in dissolution. On the religious side the Sikhs have even less success to boast of than the Safawis or Sasanidae or Maccabees.....

"In allowing itself to be provoked into militancy, Sikhism renounced its spiritual birth-right and opted for the limited and uncreative role of becoming a local political community in a single province of the Hindu world."

The above historians, have, perhaps, studied the militant aspect of Guru Gobind Singh in isolation and not in the context of his entire teachings ; otherwise some of them would not have compared the creation of the militant Khalsa with the 'Taiping' movement of China or Imami sect of Shiah as led by Junaid and his grandson Shah Ismail. It is entirely wrong to say that Guru Gobind Singh was a military leader or a political leader. He was essentially a man of God. If he wielded the sword and asked his followers to take it up, his underlying motive was essentially religious. He could not want that the votaries of Nanak should see tyranny and suffering all around and keep sitting and watch all this with rosaries in their hands. As has been stated earlier, he had a firm conviction that cowardice was the greatest vice in religion and he, therefore, wanted his Sikhs to be fearless in fighting the tyrant. But they were repeatedly warned by the Guru that they were not to misuse the sword by striking fear

in the hearts of others. He also admonished his followers that their goal was the love of God and glorification of the name and that they should, with all their might and energy, strive to attain that goal. The story of Bhai Kanhiya, how he served water to the wounded enemies and yet was blest by the great Guru, proves the emptiness of the charges of militarism, worldly ambition etc.

Dr. Indubhushan Bannerjee who has studied the history of the Sikh gurus analytically and in detail, also repudiates the above view when he observes : "The predominant trait in the Guru's character was that he was a man of God."

Sardar Narain Singh, another recent biographer of Guru Gobind Singh, on this pertinent issue observes : "India wanted a leader who should not only be a man of decision, purpose, drive, spirit, faith dynamism and far-sightedness but should also be saturated with the love of God so as to electrify people from out of the stupor into which they had fallen. And it got one in the Guru.

"Fearlessness, as evidenced above, is the keynote of his life, but it comes about when one is delivered from the tyranny of self through the love of God. His burning patriotism, his capacity to take risks and his will to resist evil and accept all kind of suffering cheerfully showed to his people the divine stuff he was made of."

# NATIONALISTIC SPIRIT IN THE POETRY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

**Rattan Singh Jaggi**

NATIONALISTIC spirit being an instinct in man, continues to flourish amongst people possessing similar feeling. According to R. G. Gettel, it is a belief on the part of the members of a nationality that they belong together, that they have a common heritage and common traditions. This spirit manifests in one or the other form in the life of the common folk of every nation, although its form varies in degree in different nations sometimes flashing like a lightening and at other times lying suppressed and subdued under the ashes of circumstances. It inter-relates with and interdepends upon the national-political structure of the country.

Nationalistic spirit imbued with human considerations and supported by his confidence in divine force was the chief characteristic of Guru Gobind Singh's poetry wherein this vein of thought could be witnessed running throughout. The aim, if any, of Guru Gobind Singh's poetry was to arouse national feeling and human dignity in the down-trodden masses of his country. Such feeling was not to be found by accident in his works, rather the conditions of the age were mostly responsible in determining this particular characteristic therein.

After the death of King Harsha, there appeared hardly any national leader of stature who could gather the people of India under one national banner to withstand the onslaughts of the foreigners and safeguard the frontiers of the country which was seen later on divided into many a fragment. The petty principalities continued to fight amongst themselves over triflings but lacked strong will and determination to face the foreign aggressor. All the same, individually they were not devoid of traits of chivalry which formed

the very basis of the national character of Rajputs. Their bards confined and concerned themselves mostly with singing heroic deeds of their particular masters eulogizing their character out of mercenary motives. They could not, therefore, inspire them, much less prepare them for any collective and co-ordinated action on a much wider national level which was but the need of the day. Although there was no dearth of power, even the powerful and the mighty were there in abundance, but all that was lacking was the national spirit and a common national leader of some stature. This could be termed as a national misfortune.

With the advent and establishment of the muslim rule in India, mutual relationship and inter-communication began to develop. No less commendable were the efforts made and steps taken by those foresighted kings like Sher Shah and Akbar towards national integration of the country. Likewise, the sufis and the saints while disseminating their sacred *bhakti* ideas, paved a way for the cultural unity and communal homogeneity of India. Guru Nanak was, undoubtedly, the product of this age of cultural unity in this land of the five rivers inhabited by the great warriors. His appearance on the Indian scene was an event of historic importance. Prior to that, right from the exit of Raja Anang Pal, there was hardly a person worth mentioning in the history of Punjab who commanded any universal acclaim or respect. This had resulted in the Punjab lying ever since then at the mercy of the muslim rulers.

Guru Nanak succeeded to a great extent in bringing closer the warring groups of Hindus and Muslims and cementing cultural and moral ties thereby. More than that, the Guru aroused the national spirit and dignity amongst the common folk. The geographical environments could find a distinct mention in the utterings of the Guru lending support to the national spirit of the people. He condemned with all the force at his command the inhuman treatment meted out to the Indians at the hands of the invading armies of the Mughals. He exposed the shortcomings and atrocities of the revenue officials, *sikdars* and *muggadams*, and laid stress upon maintaining the long and forgotten national character of the people. He urged them to abstain from using foreign language and following

blindly the ways and forms of life of the ruling class. He undertook long and hazardous journeys to arouse national consciousness and effect cultural unity of the Indian people who were being driven away from the realities of life. The disease having become till then a chronic one, it could not wholly be cured by the first guru who had to appoint his successor to continue the mission. The gurus thereafter endeavoured their best to contribute towards establishing a healthier society imbibing therein a fearless spirit of nationality. Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, however, brought the goal nearer and accelerated the pace of national struggle and self-defence.

It was high time for the people to rise as one man against the ruthless and indiscriminating policy of the rulers and pay the aggressor in the same coin. The Sikhs were ready to face the reality and bear the brunt. They were fortunate in having the great warrior-saint Guru Gobind Singh as their undaunted leader who was prepared to sacrifice everything for the protection of the motherland, the unarmed Indians and their religious beliefs.

Guru Gobind Singh took stock of the past events and religious conditions prevailing in the country and arrived at the conclusion that the complex problems of the day needed an unprecedented revolution in the course and concept of the prevalent life. To him armed revolution seemed to be the only solution of these problems. He made the wearing of the sword as obligatory along with the rosary, and started military training camps at the far-flung hilly places like Anandpur and Paonta. Side by side he set himself to composing heroic poetry to instil amongst the masses a spirit of fearlessness and chivalry which only could withstand the onslaughts of the persecutors. He also exhorted his court poets to create literature strong enough to inspire the weak and the timid to take to arms. He got much of the Puranic literature rewritten in the current language of the country and had a number of heroic narratives compiled in the monumental work called the *Dasam Granth*.

The credit, in fact, of bringing about an important revolution in the mental outlook of the masses of those times, goes entirely

to this sort of heroic poetry. Inspired by such compositions, the outcast and down-trodden who were drawn in large numbers from the lower strata of society turned into a national militia which dealt a severe blow to the Muslim imperialism and made history of the period. Prior to that, the people of the lower castes were treated as untouchables, unworthy of wielding a sword and riding a horse. None of the military leaders could think to recruit them as regulars for the defence, much less to depend upon them for any decisive victory over the enemy. It fell to the lot of Guru Gobind Singh to not only elicit their co-operation in his great mission but also to spring a surprise by making the sparrows fight and kill the hawks. The credit for arousing amongst the people of the land such sentiments of fearless fighting against the aggressors undoubtedly goes to the writings of Guru Gobind Singh which brought unwavering confidence and firm faith in the mind of soldiers of freedom who belonged to all creeds and classes.

The task which the Guru set before himself has been detailed in the *Vichitra Natak* as follows :

हम इह काज जगत मो आए । धर्म हेत गुरदेव पठाए ।  
जहां तहां तुम धर्म विचारो । दुष्ट देखियन पकरि पछारो ।  
याही काज धरु हम जनम । समझ लेहु साधु सब मनम ।  
धर्म चलावन संत उवारन । दुष्ट समन को भूल उपारन ।

The Guru laid great stress upon the cultural affinity, social unity and spiritual homogeneity which are the essentials of nationality and of which the country stood almost devoid and unpossessed.

Criticising adversely the social order which encouraged mutual hatred and nourished suspicion, the Guru brought home the warring groups, as referred to in the *Akal Ustat*, the fact that mankind was one and undivisible whole and that Ram and Rahim simply connote a few of the many names assigned to the Supreme Being and are, as such, all one. There may be different creeds and communities and vast number of sections like Bairagis, Sanyasis, Yogis, Brahmacharis, amongst the Hindus ; and Rafzis, Shafites, etc, amongst the Muslims ; they all belong to one brotherhood, one mankind. Only this approach

would lead us to the Immortal One. Every one of us bear God's semblance. We all are one with the *Alāl Purakh*. He pervades everywhere. Thus sings he—

कोऊ भइओ मुँडिया सन्नयासी कोऊ,  
जोगी भइओ कोऊ ब्रह्मचारी कोऊ जती अनमानवो ।  
हिन्दू तुरक कोऊ राफ्सी इमामसाफी,  
मनस की जात सबै एकै पहचान वो ।  
करता करीम सोई राजक रहोम उई,  
दूसरो न भेद कोई मूल भ्रम मानवो ।  
एक ही की सेव सब ही को गुरदेव एक,  
एक ही सरूप सबै एकै जोत जानवो ।

Likewise, to the Guru, all forms of worship were one, since those were for the One and made for the sake of union with Him. He, therefore, did not find any difference between Hindu worship or Muslim prayer. All mankind is one. Illusion only misleads us. People of different lands and faiths still have the same elements and organs of life. All are made of five essential constituents. The Guru elaborates this point.

देहरू मसीत सोई पूजः औ निवास उई,  
मानस सबै एक पै अनेक को भ्रमाओ है ।  
देवता अदेव जछ गंधर्व तुरक हिन्दू,  
न्यारे न्यारे देसन के भेष करे प्रमाओ है ।  
एकै नैन एकै कान एकै देह एकै वान,  
खाक बाद आतस औ आन को रलाओ है ।  
अलह अमेख सोई पुरुन औ कुरान उई,  
एक ही सरूप सबै एक ही बनाओ है ।

The Guru found that false vanity or hypocrisy amongst the people was a great obstacle on the path of national renaissance in India. Crooked people dominated both in the social and religious fields. They misled the common folk and lived upon the divisionary apprehensions and separatist tendencies of the people and continued exploiting their whims based on false notions. They never hesitated from playing against the interest of the country and nationalistic spirit of the people. Such ways of life led by the people under the influence of these hypocrites

were bound to do a great harm to the national unity and spirit of freedom. The Guru condemned vehemently the mode of life being led by Hindus and the Muslims, the former worshipping towards the East and the latter bowing towards the West; the one believing in idol-worship and the other in grave-worship. It seems whole of the world was engrossed in false and meaningless activities and had gone farther away from the path of God. On the other hand, only those who truly love Him with heart and soul, could achieve Him.

कहा भयो जो दोऊ लोचन मूंद के,  
 बैठ रहिओ वक ध्यान लगाइयो ।  
 नात फिरिओ लीए सात समुद्रन,  
 लोक गइओ परलोक गवाइओ ।  
 वारु कीओ विखियात् सो बैठ के,  
 ऐसे ही ऐस सुवैस बिताइओ ।  
 साच कहौ सुन लेहु, समै,  
 जिन प्रेम कीओ, तिन हो प्रभु पाइओ ।

#### HEROISM IN POETRY

A careful study of the *Dasam Granth* stirs one's feelings against the aggression of the ruling forces and urges the reader to strive for the establishment of a clean and scrupulous rule. There may not be a direct reference to be found in the *Dasam Granth* in clear words to the urge for political aspiration, yet the course of events which followed the sad demise of the tenth guru, bears testimony to the high consciousness of the political unity prevailing amongst the Sikhs and the people of the Punjab, and had its roots deepened in the soil during Banda Bahadur's period.

The Guru founded the national militia in the form of the Khalsa for the defence of the country and protection of the weak and the harmless. The Khalsa was fed on the divine words of chivalry and fearlessness and even as an infant was set to play not with brittle toys but with the all-steel swords and muskets. Thus did the Khalsa grow and attained maturity—an all-steel and invincible soldier-saint of the Immortal Force. With the rising of the Khalsa, the long dark night of ruthless persecution and



inhuman treatment came to an abrupt end. The people under the banner of these freedom fighters became undaunted who cared more for the dignity of the man and national prestige of the country. To inspire these soldiers of true religion and upholders of the nationalistic spirit, the Guru got the classical and Puranic events of Indian heritage recomposed into heroic verse, which when sung in tune with the eternal music turned these people into true sons of the soil worthy of their lineage.

The chief characteristic of the literature composed and compiled in that monumental work called the *Dasam Granth* was to retell the heroic tales of our forefathers as a means to solve such of the problems of the society as had been permeating therein since ages long. It becomes, however, necessary to make a few changes in the structure of these Puranic tales in accordance with the urgencies of the age. The change has made all the incarnations appear great warriors and true soldiers of Almighty when their narratives are retold in the *Dasam Granth*. They appear before us in succession as real generals, made of flesh and blood who wear arms and wield heavy swords when involved in dreadful battles and scuffles. The narrative runs simply to maintain the interest and suspense of the story. The poet could reconcile himself by nothing else except to sing these battles and exhibit the spirit of bravery amongst the demigods and goddesses. Even where the heroic element is conspicuous by its absence, the learned poet has introduced fierce battles fought by the puranic heroes. The *Judh Prabands* of the Krishnavtar is an instance which proves our contention.

Apart from the heroes playing their role worthy of mention the children and the women have also been shown fighting side by side their male-counterparts. Those times were such as demanded sacrificial contributions by all sections and classes of society towards national spirit. Only a concentrated effort could bring about such a great revolution capable of uprooting injustice and inequity.

The vein of thought running all through the body literature of the *Dasam Granth* is none the less heroic, the very nature and

tendency of which is consistent with the Kshatriya glory and grandeur. The poet takes pride in calling himself the son of Kshatriyas and rejoice in finding an opportunity to prove the mettle. The incessant struggle against injustice and aggression is the very aim of his life. The poet prays to this effect and feels himself fortunate enough to be provided with opportunities to fight and ultimately lay down his life for the cause so dear to him.

The spirit of sacrifice could be found running throughout the *Dasam Granth*, which elevates human beings to heights rarely attained hithertofore. The poet seeks this boon from the Supreme Faculty, and sings in the same strain as follows :

देह सिवा वर मोहि इहै ,  
 सब करमन ते कवहूँ न रऐ ।  
 न डरो अरि सो जब जाय करो ,  
 निसचै कर अपनी जीत करो ।  
 आर किरन हो अपने ही मन को ,  
 इह लालच हउ गुन तड उचरो ।  
 जब आव की अउध निदान वनै .  
 अतिही रन मै तव जूझ मरो ।

In the *Dasam Granth* life of only such a person is eulogized and considered with any mention, as is imbued with this spirit of struggle against oppression and suppression. Such fighters of freedom are worthy of our praise and respect—

धन जोउ तिह को जग मै ,  
 भाव ते ही चित मै जुधु विचारै ।  
 देह अवित न नित रहै ,  
 जस नाव चढ़ै भवकणा तारै ।

In fact, the literature displaying the desire for religious war should have a forceful factor of self renunciation and continuous struggle prevalent therein. Undoubtedly the *Dasam Granth* has proved a successful source of inspiration to arouse these sentiments in the minds of the common folk. Each verse of the great classic sings

*in this very strain and its fabric is interwoven with fibres of this spirit. The poet is at his best when he is describing a battle scene or narrates the heroic deeds of the brave warriors of truth. The skilful display of such a nationalistic spirit waging war for the national welfare and emancipation could only be the work of a master-mind which after lapse of centuries succeeded in rehabilitating national glory and dignity amongst the people who, with a twinkling of an eye, were made to wield the sword as defty saint-warriors.*

The narration of battles has been introduced with a view to supplement the war of true religion. The battles have been narrated in a lucid and attractive style which inspires the man with fondness for the struggle and takes away the horrors of war. The similies and metaphors employed therein bring to mind the vivid imagery of *Phag* (seasonal dance), the marriage, the tavern, the dancing hall, the play, torrential rains, the surging streams and the deep ocean, which has been co-related with the lives of the common folk. The war between the bad feelings and nobler sentiments of a man has dexterously been brought out with an ultimate victory for the latter.

The various aspects of war right from its conception to its resolve have beautifully been narrated in detail in the *Dasam Granth*. The mental attitude of the warriors towards vengeance, the getting together for purposes of waging war, their pledges, the battle formations, their darting for the battlefield, their struggle for achieving the upper hand, their onslaughts, the heroic deeds of the leaders, the conditions of the parties winning and losing the war, all these aspects and scenes have minutely been described with success. This helped disseminate the nationalistic spirit throughout the country.

The love for the country and urge for the cultural unity which had since the age of Harsha eloped could be witnessed from one end of the country to the other. The people who had lost the nationalistic spirit came to repossess it with vehemence. They began to take pride in the cultural heritage of the country. The aim of Guru Gobind Singh's life stood almost fulfilled, and his compositions

succeeded to a great extent in rejuvenating the nationalistic spirit of the common-folk. The true followers of the great Guru stood united like a rock, all gulfs were bridged, and the great population of the country gathered under one banner and dealt a severe blow to foreign aggression and social injustice. Tyranny was buried deep in its grave and the holy soil was delivered of the atrocities of ruling class.

The sacred land of incarnations had thus given birth some 300 years back to this great soul, which was supreme, unique and unsurpassed in deeds of heroism and unexcelled in acts of chivalry which led the country on to the path of cultural unity and emotional emancipation and which brought forth unprecedented alliance between *bhakti* (worship) and *shakti* (force) and which imbued in the hearts of the people a spirit of sacrifice, dignity and nationalistic welfare and lent them great strength to withstand aggression and injustice. He succeeded in uprooting forces antagonistic to cultural and national unity and created the invincible Khalsa, the national militia and universal brotherhood, and did away with all sorts of differences on account of caste, creed and colour and removed the barriers between the lower and the upper classes and brought within his fold whole of the mankind making the people of the country strong enough to lead a life of glory and pride commanding respect from all quarters. The Khalsa was brought into existence to eradicate evil and deliver the people of India from foreign rule and protect the downtrodden. The Khalsa razed to the ground the great castle of the Mughal rule like a house of cards. To achieve this end the Guru sacrificed himself and the whole of his family at the alter of national homogeneity and cultural unity and lit an immortal flame of patriotic spirit.

# GURU GOBIND SINGH'S PRAYER

Sant Singh Sekhon

## I

It might appear quite strange to some, and to others even heretical, to say that there are many elements in Guru Gobind Singh's thought and writing that give it quite a different stamp from the thought and writing of the first nine gurus whose tradition he had inherited.

For one thing, he seems considerably to have ignored the emphasis, characteristic of Sikh thought and belief in general, on the necessity of the Guru as an intermediary between the Godhead and the individual, if not indeed as the vicegerent of God on earth. It has to be noted that while in the *Adi Granth*, every section of the hymns begins with an invocation to the Guru, in the words *guruprasad*, meaning 'by the grace of the Guru', Guru Gobind Singh begins by a straight invocation to God Himself in the words '*tuḡasad*' meaning 'by Thy grace'.

In the body of the hymns composed by Guru Gobind Singh also, there is no mention of 'the Guru', while in the *Ādi Granth*, in almost every hymn, deliverance, emancipation and good for man are said to be possible only by the Guru's grace. Indeed, it is emphasized, over and over again, in the compositions of the first five gurus that without the Guru's grace deliverance, redemption or good is in fact unattainable, however hard one may try. Only in the few hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth guru, this emphasis on the grace of the Guru is perhaps missing. And considering that there is a gap of three places between Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Arjan, with whom the literary tradition of the Sikh scriptural composition comes almost to an end, it is tempting to speculate on the change that has come about in the emotional and devotional content of the Sikh faith. The beginning

of this change can be marked also in the assumption by the sixth guru, Hargobind, who was Guru Tegh Bahadur's father, of the sword of temporal authority along with that of spiritual authority, the sword of *miri* along with that of *piri*.

Guru Gobind Singh is known to have created a vast body of literature. But he did not see fit to incorporate his own compositions in the *Ādi Granth*, as he had incorporated his father's. One reason for this might be considered to be modesty. But that could not be the reason. Guru Arjan, who compiled the *Ādi Granth*, is the author of more than half of it. Following in his footsteps, Guru Gobind Singh could indeed have exalted his own work to the rank of scripture, instead of placing the *Ādi Granth* on that high pedestal and refraining completely from including any of his compositions in it.

The real reason probably was that he saw his own literary creation from a different angle. There is no doubt that a part of his compositions, because of their devotional nature, are regarded and revered as scripture by the Sikhs even though he did not thus ordain it. But Guru Gobind Singh was conscious that he was composing not for any definite scriptural, but for a wider cultural purpose. Of his compositions a great part is not devotional and scriptural at all. It is not even concerned with the Sikh canon. In fact, it is largely concerned with the popular myths of Hinduism, accounts of the origins of creation, the twenty-four incarnations of Vishnu, the destruction of the demons by Durga, and other puranic legends. He has gone even further on the road to a secular culture by writing stories of secular love, without romanticising or idealising the theme of love ; indeed, in a purely secular and courtly style.

At the same time as Guru Gobind Singh discarded the emphasis on the grace of the guru and invoked instead the grace of God Himself, he put an end of the institution of the Guru among his Sikhs. And in Sikh history and tradition the emergence of the institution of a personal Guru became from that time an unforgivable heresy.

Guru Gobind Singh is said to have conferred guruship on the *Adi Granth*, in which, unlike in his own compositions, the main emphasis is on the need of a guru for the emancipation of the individual. In this he seems to have implied that if Sikh society felt it necessary for a guru as an intermediary between God and the individual, let it seek it in the compositions of the earlier gurus, not in his own compositions.

Another trend in his compositions that points to a second similarly marked difference in his spiritual make is that he completely discarded the myth of the individual loving and adoring God, as a woman or the traditional Hindu wife loves and adores her lover or husband. Nowhere in his compositions does Guru Gobind Singh give himself up to that lyricism. Only in one four-lined stanza attributed to him does he express himself in relation to God in something of that strain, when he calls himself the *murid* or disciple, and God the *mittar* and *yar*. In fact, from this terminology it would seem that this hymn might be the composition of a disciple or *murid* of Guru Gobind Singh and the *mittar* and *yar* might be he himself. He must surely have been regarded in that way by his followers, taking into view that gallant cavalier shape in which he evokes the love of the Sikhs, even to this day a prince with a cockade in his turban, a hawk on his thumb, and a dark-blue steed under his thighs. To lend strength to the view that this particular hymn may not be Guru Gobind Singh's is the fact that in some early editions of the *Dasam Granth*, it is not included.

## II

Of the devotional compositions of Guru Gobind Singh, the chief are the *Jap* (Recitation), the *Akal Ustat* (in praise of the Timeless), the thirty-three *swayyas* or longlined stanzas which more or less repeat the theme of God's absolute and negative attributes as given in the *Akal Ustat*, and the *Benati Chaupai* (Quatrains in Prayer). It is on this last that this paper seeks to lay special emphasis.

*Benati Chaupai* is a short poem of exactly one hundred lines, and its main burden is an urgent appeal to God almighty for

protection. It is possible to read a sublimated meaning into its invocations, but its secular urgency is too pronounced to be missed.

For instance, it begins with quite a worldly-minded appeal :

Extend Thy hand to shield me, Lord,  
And all my heart's desires fulfil ;  
Ever may my mind dwell at Thy feet,  
Deem me Thy own, and work my weal.

It is not a simple prayer for spiritual, other-worldly redemption. Rather in tones reminiscent of the prayers of the ancient Aryans in the *R̥g-Veda*, or the Jews in the *Old Testament*, he asks for fulfilment of the heart's desires, for worldly favours, though of course a humble communion with the divine is also sought.

In the second stanza the secular appeal is still more pronounced, with the prayer :

Slay Thou my enemies one and all,  
Save me from them by Thy own hand,  
May all my people live in peace,  
Who serve, O Lord, as I command.

Of course, one can contend that the enemies whose destruction is sought here are spiritual enemies, the traditional five of Hindu spirituality, lust, anger, greed, fatuity and pride. But as against these enemies, the Guru prays for the happiness and peace of his family, his people, his *parivāra*, his servants and disciples, *sevaks* and Sikhs.

And again in the third stanza the supplication is repeated :

Protect me with Thy own hand, Lord  
And all my foes forthwith destroy,  
May all my hopes fulfilment find,  
I crave communion with Thee.

Here again, the craving for communion is expressed. The appeal is reinforced in the fourth stanza with the words :



I will not worship other than Thee,  
 From Thee I can get every boon ;  
 Redeem my servants and disciples,  
 Crush my enemies one by one.

Uphold me with Thine own strength,  
 Fear of the hour of death annul,  
 Be ever Thou on my side, O Lord,  
 And take me under Thy banner of steel.

And this section of the secular appeal ends on the note :

Protect me for Thou canst protect,  
 Beloved, master, saint and guard ;  
 Friend of the poor, slayer of the wicked,  
 Of the fourteen worlds Thou art the Lord.

The argument that the protection sought is physical is strengthened by instances in the *Vichitra Natak* when the Guru thanks God for saving him from death or harm in the midst of battle. For instance, in cante viii, we are told :

Hari Chand in rage again pulled at  
 His bow, the arrow struck my horse.  
 A second was aimed at me, it grazed  
 My ear. The Lord saved me from worse.

At this point the question of determining the identity of the Godhead seems to engage the Guru's mind. And he sets about placing Him above the level at which traditional Hinduism puts Him, that is, the divinity embodied in the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Śiva : Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer. Guru Gobind Singh's Godhead transcends these three as a kind of time-spirit, and he expressed it in this manner :

In Time did Brahma assume a form,  
 In Time did Shiva come down below ;  
 In Time did Vishnu reveal himself ;  
 Of time is all this wondrous show,  
 To time that brought the Yogi Shiva  
 And Brahma who is the Lord of the Ved ;  
 To Time that fashioned all this world,  
 I make my bow to Him, indeed.

Then the Guru expatiates upon the qualities of this Godhead, who is the creator of gods, demons and titans, who looks to the well-being of His worshippers and does not hesitate to slay their oppressors. He resides in every heart and has empathy with all, large and small, good and bad.

Then the theory of creation and its dissolution is put forth almost in the same terms in which traditional Hinduism has conceived it. But a rider is put on, that this Godhead is not only above all forms, god or idol, but is beyond the comprehension of even the *Veda*, which Hindu tradition will of course find it hard to accept.

And here again the relativity of man's knowledge of God is stressed :—

All differently describe Thy truth,  
As each one's wisdom comprehends :  
How first this universe was made  
We know not, nor how it extends.

Thus this universe is according to Guru Gobind Singh, a wondrous show put up by time. Indeed, the Guru has in many other contexts expatiated on this aspect of the Godhead, that it is the spirit of time.

Against the concept of the relativity of deistic notions and forms, Guru Gobind Singh regards time as eternal and all-pervading, and the absolute deity from whom the universe emanates and to which it relapses from to time.

That time the Creator draws it out  
Creation takes its myriad shapes.  
And when again He draws it in,  
Back into Him all shapes relapse.

The word *kāla* is used by Guru Gobind Singh in the sense of death also, as the term of a being on this earth. In Sikh parlance, generally, the word *kāla* has come to mean death. In this sense

the term is used in the *chaupai* and distinction is drawn between *kāla* and *kala*: *kala* means the Absolute God, probably in the sense of the power behind creation and *kāla* means death. Similarly in another verse there is mention of *kāla phās* or the knot or net of death.

Two other forms of the concept of *kāla* are found in Guru Gobind Singh's thought and speech. One is *mahākāla*, the great time; and *kālikā*, the small time. I have interpreted these to signify the macro—and micro forms of *Kala*. *Mahākāla* is thus eternity and *kālikā* is terrestrial time or time on this earth.

Guru Gobind Singh seems to take delight in presenting the sword as the manifestation of time in its micro-form. It has to be noted that Guru Gobind Singh gives particular importance to the sword as the power behind his mission of propagating *dharma* or the law. In many places the sword is exalted to the position of a deity or goddess; and canto upon canto are sung in praise of it. This has led many to believe that Guru Gobind Singh was a worshipper of the goddess *Kāli*. This belief is strengthened by the Guru's three compositions on the myth of *Kāli*, Durga or Chandi, destroying the demons who had driven Indra, the king of the gods, from his abode in heaven. The story is taken from the *Markanda Puran*, as is openly acknowledged, and should accordingly be considered only a composition in the literary traditions of India. But the Guru uses the words Durga and Bhagauti in other contexts also. This coupled with the vogue of the worship of the goddess among the hill people amidst whom Guru Gobind Singh lived seems to lend credence to the belief.

But evidently the Guru cannot be regarded as a worshipper of the goddess. The entire burden of Sikh thought, in general, and Guru Gobind Singh's writing, in particular, is strongly and decidedly opposed to the worship of any deities other than the Absolute. It seems the Guru was pleased to offer to the people around him a Durga or Kāli, not in the shape of a goddess or idol, but in the shape of the sword. 'This is the real Durga', he seems to say to them, 'which can destroy the demons that have dethroned Indra, the chief of your deities, in this country'.

This identification of temporal divinity with the sword is something unique in the experience of Guru Gobind Singh and his followers and gives him and them the stamp of a warrior caste, which indeed the Sikhs were to become for the next hundred years. God henceforth assumes for Guru Gobind Singh the aspect of the sword-arm, Lord of the sword, and the last section of the *chaupai*, beginning with :

Of those who seek the Lord of the sword  
Oppressors shall be hurt and die.

concludes with :

I seek Thy peace, O Lord of the sword,  
Extend Thy hand for my relief.  
Come to my rescue everywhere  
Save me from all oppression and grief.

Now this entreaty, this prayer, is remarkable for its forthright directness. It is an entreaty for protection and in the context of the time in which its author lived, its purpose is clearly understood. The Guru is face to face with an imperial power that has remained the despair of the patriotic Indian element for about eight hundred years. A serious challenge to it has no doubt developed in the South in the shape of the Maratha struggle led by the great Sivaji, but in the Punjab opposition to the imperial might of Aurangzeb is almost a forlorn hope, and only fanatical, intense, desperate belief in the personal engagement of some divine power can launch on it. The Guru's prayer is the supplication of a man in desperate straits, being pitched against formidable odds yet facing them with almost superhuman courage. Such a person need must feel face to face with his Creator, as in an earlier age, the hero of the *Mahabharata*, Arjuna is face to face with Krishna. But there is a difference. In the *Gita*, it is the Divine, in the shape of Krishna, that exhorts Arjuna to fight the forces of evil, and promises protection and redemption. In this poem, it is man urging his Creator to support him fully in his struggle. It is like Arjuna seeking protection of Krishna and imploring Him to become his shield.

## III

This identification of the Godhead with the sword by Guru Gobind Singh has led many to think that Guru Gobind Singh made it an aim of his followers to acquire political power. In fact, the great Sikh writer, Bhai Santokh Singh, separated from Guru Gobind Singh by little more than a century makes him say : *Raj bina nahin dharma barhai hai*. But, perhaps, in Guru Gobind Singh's mind the sword or military strength was necessary only to defend his spreading faith from the danger of suppression from both sides, Mughal imperialism and Hindu feudalism.

But one has to accept the aggressive implications of military strength even when it is acquired and developed solely with a defensive purpose. Once the Sikhs had grown into a military organisation, they naturally began to cherish ambitions of establishing their hegemony over the whole of India. For historical reasons this ambition was not realised. The chief strength of the Sikh organisation in the Indian national context, lay in its penchant against Mughal empire. But so far as the Mughal empire was concerned, the Marathas had also successfully challenged it. In fact, the Marathas had practically destroyed the Mughal empire before the Sikhs came to acquire effective power in the Punjab. Only the partial destruction of Maratha power by Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1761 provided the needed opportunity to the Sikhs to gain power. They even succeeded in preventing a new Afghan power succeeding the Mughals as the Mughals had succeeded the Lodhis.

The Marathas recovered from the disaster inflicted upon them by Ahmad Shah Abdali, and bade fair again to becoming the successors of the Mughals. But precisely at this time, the Maratha power was broken by the rising British power, and that again was an opportunity for the Sikhs. Had the Afghans in the north and the British in the south not paralysed Maratha strength, the Marathas might have established themselves over the Punjab, before the Sikhs had acquired enough strength to challenge them.

In that event, it is imaginable that the military organisation of the Sikhs would have come into conflict with the Marathas. A clash did actually take place in the year 1795 when the Maratha General, Anta Rao, failed to reduce the newly established chieftaincy of Patiala under Baba Ala Singhs' great grandson, Raja Sahib Singh. What success the Sikhs would have achieved against the Marathas in a wider context, that is, against Maratha power unimpaired by the aggression of the British, is now a hypothetical question.

Another opportunity came the way of the Sikhs in the nineteenth century when Ranjit Singh had built up a mighty kingdom in the Punjab. But now their adversary was a power other than the Afghans or the Marathas, a power operating on a level higher than the level of a feudal empire against which the Sikhs had come to establish themselves.

The defeat of the Sikhs at the hands of the British has long been a national lament in India, and the Sikhs and others sympathetic to them have been inclined to regard it as a kind of accident. But if we look at it from an objective historical point of vantage, we must concede that the Sikhs had really no chance of succeeding against British imperialism. Ranjit Singh seems to have known it, for no amount of provocation could make him challenge British power. After his death, if the Sikhs had won the battles of the Sutlej valley, they would have lost to the British on the bank of the Jamuna at Delhi, or may be a little way further south or east.

Tagore and others have expressed the view that Sikhism as a religion might have found wider acceptance in India, if it had not become militarily oriented. But in view of the wider historical context outlined above one may doubt if the task was so easy.

Anyway the Sikhs have not given up the ambition of becoming the leading cultural force in India, though at the present moment this ambition is not explicit. For some, the realisation of this hope lies in a healthy competition with the other elements in Indian society and in seeking to secure from other Hindu

communities a reorientation of attitudes towards Sikhism. Others are perhaps more fanatical and might be even chimerical in their hopes. In any case, to blame Guru Gobind Singh for the limited success of the Sikh faith is not justified, academically or historically.

## GURU GOBIND SINGH'S PRAYER

Translated by

**Sant Singh Sekhon**

Extend Thy hand to shield me, Lord,  
And all my heart's desires fulfil.  
Ever may my mind dwell at Thy feet ;  
Deem me Thy own, and work my weal.

Slay Thou my enemies, one and all,  
Save me from them by Thy own hand ;  
May all my people live in peace,  
Who serve, O Lord, as I command.

Protect me with Thy own hand, Lord,  
And all my foes forthwith destroy,  
May all my hopes fulfilment find,  
I crave communion ever with Thee.

I will not worship other than Thee,  
When Thou Canst grant me every boon.  
Keep my disciples from all harm,  
And crush my enemies one by one.

Uphold me with Thy own strength,  
Fear of the hour of death annul.  
Be ever Thou on my side, Lord,  
And take me under Thy banner of steel.

Protect me for Thou canst protect,  
Beloved, master, saint and guard.  
Friend of the poor, slayer of the wicked,  
Of the fourteen worlds Thou art the Lord.



## II

In time did Brahma assume a form,  
In time did Shiva come down below.  
In time did Vishnu reveal himself,  
Of time is all this wondrous show.

To time that brought the Yogi Shiva,  
And Brahma who is the Lord of the Ved,  
To time that fashioned all this world,  
I make my bow to Him, indeed.

Time that did fashion all this world,  
Created gods and demons and titans,  
Who only lives from first to last,  
He is my Master who enlightens.

To Him alone I make my bow,  
Who fashioned all creation this,  
Who gives His servants all the good,  
And in a trice oppressors slays.

He knows the secrets of all hearts,  
With good and bad has empathy,  
On ant and bulky elephant,  
He is pleased to cast a kindly eye.

When a saint is hurt He feels the hurt,  
He shares the good man's happiness ;  
The ache of everyone He feels,  
Knows every heart's inmost recess.

## III

That Time the Creator draws it out  
Creation takes its myriad shapes,  
And when again He draws it in,  
Back into Him all forms relapse.

All shapes creation has assumed,  
Speak out according to their wit,  
But Thou who know'st all, in and out,  
Remainst apart from all of it.

Formless, unchanging, absolute,  
Without beginning, count or age ;  
The fool aspires to spell him out,  
The Ved whose secret cannot gauge.

He guesses God to lie in stone,  
Egregious fool knows not a bit ;  
He calls his deity the All-good,  
The formless stays beyond his wit.

All differently describe Thy truth  
As each one's wisdom comprehends ;  
How first this universe was made  
We know not, nor how it extends.

Ineffable forms of one and the same,  
From beggar even to lord and king ;  
Forms from the egg, and from the womb,  
From water, and from the soil may spring.

Somewhere it blossoms into shape,  
Elsewhere shrinks into shapeless mass :  
A marvel this creation shows.  
Self-growing forms, beginningless.

#### IV

Come to my rescue forthwith, Lord,  
Believers save, deniers slay ;  
The wicked, those who raise all evil,  
The impure, kill them all in the fray.

*Of those who seek the Lord of the Sword  
Oppressors shall be hurt and die.  
From those who throw them on Thy feet  
Thou wardst off all calamity.*

*Who call just once on the Lord of Power,  
Death dare not make approach to them,  
From them all evil keeps away,  
They are protected for all time.*

*Of those on whom Thy kindly glance  
Is cast, all aches are overcome.  
No evil and ill shall touch them ever,  
All weal and power shall come to them.*

*And he who calls on Thee but once  
Escapes for ever the knot of death.  
The man who meditates on your name  
Is saved from sorrow, sin and sloth.*

*I seek Thy peace, O Lord of the Sword,  
Extend Thy hand for my relief.  
Come to my rescue everywhere,  
Save me from all oppression and grief.*

# SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

Trilochan Singh

IN Sikhism man is the source of spirituality, society is the centre of moral and creative action, and God is the end of all religious effort. The object of Sikhism, as a way of life, is to create a spiritual kinship and unity between man and man, between man and God and between man and society, be he a Hindu, Muslim, Christian or a Jew. "All men are equal at social level, and on all God bestows His grace and bounty without discrimination."<sup>1</sup>

The aim of Sikhism is to help the seeker of truth to discover within himself the light of perfection, and the power of immanence, and realize God not only in sublime mystical experiences, but in the very life and existence of humanity. This world, for a Sikh, is not an illusion nor a vale of sorrow from which man must run away, but the earth on which man lives, a temple of righteous actions : *dharamsāl*.<sup>2</sup> "This world is the abode of Truth and the True one resideth in it."<sup>3</sup> The Sikh gurus did not believe in any abstract and bloodless mysticism, but in a wide awake spirituality of healthy social, cultural and political wisdom.

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1. *sabhai sājhi vāl sadāyan,*  
*tū kise na dīśai bāhū nā jio.*

*Ādi Granth* : Nānak V, *Mūjh*, p. 79.

2. *pavan pāni agni pātāl*  
*tis vic dharti thāp rakkhi dharm sāl*  
He made winds to blow and water to run,  
He made fire, He made the lower regions,  
In the midst of all,  
He set the earth as the temple of righteousness.

Guru Nānak : *Japji* 34.

3. *eh jag sace kī hai koṭh dī*  
*sace kā vic vās*

Guru Nānak ; *Āsā-di-Vār*, 3. 2.

The Sikh gurus did not train their disciples on hill tops or on the banks of holy rivers, nor did they deliver their sermons in forest dwellings. They trained them in the heart of humanity. They disciplined them in the rough and tumble market-place of the world, and in the strife and struggle of the battle-field.<sup>4</sup> All this was done in the mental and spiritual universe of a newly created social order within the span of two hundred years. It was a social order in which the Brahmin could eat with the *pariāh*, the Hindu would not run away from a Muslim calling him a *malecha*, and a Muslim did not dare to call a Hindu a *kāfir*.<sup>5</sup> The ideal man in this social order was a saint soldier, a creative labourer, a poet apostle and a sage statesman.

#### FOUNDATION OF THE SIKH SOCIAL ORDER

The foundation stone of all social institutions of the Sikh society was laid by Guru Nanak.<sup>6</sup> The bricks and mortar was provided and the mansion was constructed by his eight successors. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last guru, gave it the artistic finish

4. *Khālsā soe jo niñdā tūge,*  
*Khālsā soe ladai hoe āgai,*  
*Khālsā soe Gurū hit lāvai,*  
*Khālsā soe sār mukh khāi ai,*  
*Khālsā soe nirdhah ko pāle,*  
*Khālsā soe duśt ko gāle.*

He is the Khalsa who gives up calumny ; he is the Khalsa who fights for *dharma* in the fore-front ; He is the Khalsa who wins the love of the Guru ; he is the Khalsa who fearlessly faces the armed attack of the enemy ; he is the Khalsa who looks after the destitute ; he is the Khalsa who destroys despots and tyrants.

Guru Gobind Singh : *Tankhāhnāmā*

5. *rūh dovai ik jānai soi sijhsī,*  
*kufar goā kufrānai peyā dajhsī,*  
*sabh dunyā subhān sac samāiai.*

*Ādi Granth* XI, *Vār Mājh* p. 142.

6. *mārya sikā jagat vic Nānak nirmal pañth calāyā,*  
 Nānak minted a new coin of his Faith,  
 And created a new pañth in the world.

Bhai Gurdās : *Vār* 1, 45.

to make this social and cultural edifice a living and lasting monument. He built for it the doors and windows and gave the locks and keys, illuminating it with blazing lights of perennial wisdom and inspiration.<sup>7</sup> Very early in life, Guru Nanak started dilating dogmas, puncturing presumptions and disregarding age-old social customs and laws. By refusing to wear the sacred thread and breaking away from the essential *sainiskāras* (sacrament) of the Hindu social order Guru Nanak disassociated himself from Brahmanism, formalism and ritualism of the Hindu society in which he was born. He equally resented the dogmatism, and intolerance of the corrupt *qazis* and *mullās* of his times.<sup>8</sup> He and his successors gave to Sikhism completely new social laws, new sacrament, new code of conduct, new scriptures and a church of its own.<sup>9</sup>

Many scholars who study Sikhism from outside, without referring to the original sources of Sikh history, and without reading even once the basic Sikh scriptures, tend to describe Sikhism as not what it is, nor what it appears to be from its history and doctrines, but what they expect it to be, or what they wish it to be, in relation to their own faith and culture. Some Hindu scholars have taken pains to describe Sikhism as one of the countless sects of Sikhism, some Muslim scholars call it an offshoot of Islam, yet more recently some Christian scholars have tried to prove that the major doctrines of Sikhism have been inspired by

7. *kehio prabhū so bhākh hauṁ,*  
*kisū nā kān rākh hauṁ,*  
*kisū nā bhekh bhij hauṁ*  
*alekh bij bij hauṁ ;—6 ; 34*  
*ham eh kāj jagat mo āe,*  
*dharm het gurdev paṭhāe,*  
*jalān tahiān tum dharm biṭhāro*  
*duṣṭ dokhian pakar pachāro*

Guru Gobind Singh : *Vichitra Nātak* , Ch 6 : 42.

8. *Janam Sākhī Meharlān, Janam Sākhī Bālā, Janam Sākhī Mani Singh* (see early life of Guru Nanak) ; *Āsā-di-Vār* 15 : 1, 3
9. Bhai Gurdas : *Vār I*, 38 ; *Vār 19* ; *Vār 28* ;  
 Bhai Nand Lall : *Rahatnāmā* and *Tankhāhnāmā*.

Christianity.<sup>10</sup> The elements and the factors which attract their attention in comparative study are no doubt there, but what they fail to see is that Sikhism is much more than that.<sup>11</sup> Sikh scriptures make it very clear, where Sikhism stands in relation to Hinduism and Islam. Guru Nanak described himself as witness of both the Hindus and Muslims, who was physically and mentally the same as any Hindu or Muslim, but differed in his ethical, metaphysical and spiritual outlook. "There were two paths, the Hindu and the Muslim; God was one and he did not admit any difference in the lovers of God. All who understood the divine mandate through the Guru's word belonged to his faith. He identified himself with them no matter they were Hindus and Muslims, by their creed or birth."<sup>12</sup> Guru Arjan says :

The one Lord is my *Gosāīn* and *Allāh*,  
I have detached myself from the Hindu and Muslim cults ;  
I neither perform the Hindu worship nor the Muslim *namāz* ;  
I adore the one Infinite within my heart :

10. It is very unfortunate indeed that with possibly the sole exception of Prof : Haran Chakladar who after a deep study of Adī Granth has produced a very scholarly commentary of Guru Granth in Bengali, no Hindu scholar has seriously studied Sikh scriptures. Hence the tendency to call it a sect of Hinduism. Mirza Ahmad, the leader of the Ahmadiyyat movement (1860) proved that Nanak was a Muslim by creed, and the Hindus rejected his faith because there were too many Islamic doctrines in it. The writer on Sikhism in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 20th ed : and Dr. C. H. Loehlin in his "*The Christian Approach to the Sikh*" (1966) emphasises the influence of Christian doctrines on Sikhism.
11. The Sikh is not a Hindu or a Muslim; he is the disciple of the One Eternal Guru of the world, and all who learn of Him are truly Sikhs and must not corrupt His teachings with the confused utterances of men who live among them and around. Sikhism is no disguised Hindu sect, but an independent revelation of the one Truth of all sects; It is no variant of Muslim teachings.

Duncan Greenless : *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 216.

12. *hājīān puchyā, he fakir : tūñ Hindū harī ke Musalmān ? tūñ Bāba bolyā maiñ Hindū Musalmānā dohāñ dā gavāh hūñ.*

Bhai Mani Singh : *Gyan Ratnavli Sakhi* 31.

Neither am I a Hindu nor a Musalmān ;  
 My body and soul are dedicated to Him.  
 Whom the Muslims call *Allāh* and the Hindus call Rām.<sup>13</sup>

Guru Arjan frankly stated that Sikhism was neither Hinduism nor Islam, it was a distinct way of life embracing the seekers of truth of all creeds.<sup>14</sup> He not only gave a theoretical expression to his beliefs, but he died for them.<sup>15</sup>

The second serious error that prevails in the mind of many scholars who study Sikhism from outside is that the first nine Sikh gurus were only reformers in the pale of Hinduism, while Guru Gobind Singh alone built a social and religious order distinct from the Hindus. The social structure of Sikhism was not only completed by the first nine gurus but its various institutions were tried and tested for two centuries. All that Guru Gobind Singh did was to reform the existing order from within, and transfer the spiritual and temporal authority of the individual Guru to the collective-spirit of the Khalsa on a permanent basis. It was a tremendous task and Guru Gobind Singh did it with the genius and foresight of a dramatic artist and a Grecian-law-giver. Guru Gobind Singh clearly points out in his writings that all the gurus were one in spirit ; their message was one and the same ; and they lived and

13. *ek Gosāñ Allāh merā ; Hindū Turk doliñ niberā,*  
*pujā kuroñ nā nivāz guzāroñ, ek nirañkar le ridai namskāroñ,*  
*na ham Hindū nā Musalmān ; Allāh Ram ke piñd prān.*

*Ādi Granth* p. 1136.

14. For other references proving that Sikhism is neither a sect of Islam nor of Hinduism, but distinct from these two creeds see : *Ādi Granth* : NI, *Gauri Ashtp* : p. 223 ; NV, *Rāmkalī*, p. 885 ; NV *Rāmkalī* p. 856 ; K *Prabhātī* : p. 1349. Guru Gobind Singh : *Akāl Ustat* : verse 85, 86, 87 ; Guru Gobind Singh *Chaubis Avatār* 18, 19, 20.
15. Thus he (Guru Arjan) acquired quite some fame in the country as an expounder of religion and many simple minded Hindu and also some ignorant Muslims admired his character and piety. This business has been going on for three or four generations. For a long time past it has been my intention to shut this shop. ....having confiscated his property, I ordered that he should be put to death with tortures.

*Tuzki-i-Jahangiri*



worked for the same truth. "Only the ignorant consider them to be different, the saints and seers know them to be one and the same in spirit."<sup>16</sup> They built one and the same edifice of faith, and they enunciated the same social philosophy.

My approach to the present subject of discussion is historical and sociological, and all the important features of the social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh will be discussed in the context of the existing Hindu and Islamic social orders, which formed the matrix and the raw material of the Sikh social order. The points of meeting with the two great traditional cultures and the points of departure from them will also be discussed.

### CONCEPTION OF MAN, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

To understand the social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh we must be clear about his conception of man, society and culture as reflected in his writings. Man, according to Guru Gobind Singh, is not an accidental creation of nature, nor a mere bundle of sensory desires but a living spirit with a destiny and mission on earth by God.<sup>17</sup> Man is the point of intersection between the sensible and the spiritual world, where the two great rhythms of cosmic tension meet and are exchanged. Enjoying a unique key position, man is the universe's value and consciousness. Humanity is the immanent spirit of God creating playfully an ever new world of values around it. This is the central thought of the Master from which all his doctrines and teachings flow. Man is called to a higher sphere and it is his task to bring about its establishment by eliminating darkness and fighting the forces of evil in all spheres : religious, social, and political.<sup>18</sup> The purpose of his life is to achieve

16. *Sri Nānak Angad kar mānā, Amardās Angad pelcānū ;  
Amardās Ramdās kahāio, sādhan lakhā mūd nā pāyo.*

Guru Gobind Singh *Vachitra Natak* 5.9

see also *Gursobhā Grañth*, by Sainapati, verse 46.

17. Guru Gobind Singh : *Vichitra Natak (Akāl purkh rāe is kit prati)* : 13

18. *Tāhi talhān tai dharm calāe  
kabudh karan te lok hatāe*

ibid., chap. 6 : 29

perfection of mind, body and soul and help others to do so and thus create a happy and peaceful society. Man, for Guru Gobind Singh, does not mean a Hindu or a Muslim, a Punjabi or an Indian, a whiteman or a coloured one. When he refers to man, he mentions the members of world community like the French, the Chinese, the Manchurians, the Armenians, Pathans and Arabs, the Gorkhas, Indians from Bengal and Talingana<sup>19</sup>, the Greeks, Romans, Englishmen.<sup>20</sup>

The concept of society is found in two senses in the writings of the Sikh gurus. It is generally synonymous with human society. It is also used in a limited sense for religious groups. When, for example, Guru Nanak criticises the dirty practices of the Jains,<sup>21</sup> he does not condemn the religion but only the social aspect of this religious society. When Guru Nanak says: "This age is a drawn sword, the kings are butchers, goodness hath taken wings and flown; in the dark night of falsehood I see not the moon of Truth anywhere,"<sup>22</sup> he is not speaking of the rulers of any particular State or country but of the world situation at that time. In his writings Guru Gobind Singh addresses the whole human society. Even if he refers to a particular person or group, the lesson is for the whole mankind. Guru Amardas has made it clear: *parthāi sākhi mahā purkh bolde, sājhi sagal jahāne.* When sages speak about a particular person, the moral is for the whole humanity."

The words, culture, tradition and civilization are deemed synonymous in the writings of the gurus. There are national social

19. *farā ke farāngi mānai, kandhāri kurevi jānai*  
*pacham ke pachmi pachānai nij kām haiñ,*  
*Marhatā maghele teri mun ko tapasvā kare*  
*Drādvē Tilañgi pelcāne dharam dhām hai. 245*  
*Gokhā gun gāvai, cin macin ke sis nāve*  
*Tibeti dhyāe dokh deh ko dālat hai. 245*

Guru Gobind Singh : *Akal Ustat*

20. Greeks, Romans, Portuguese are mentioned in *Triya Chariters*, of the *Dasam Granth*.  
 21. *Ādi Granth* Guru Nanak : *Var Mājh*, p. 149.  
 22. *ibid.*, p. 145.

cultures in the world, and the differences between these national cultures are superficial. The reasons assigned for these superficial differences by Guru Gobind Singh are : *nyare nyare desan ke bhesan ko prabhāo hai* :<sup>23</sup> different social customs, environments and manners of different countries have created these differences. The gurus divided the world into two religious cultural traditions and civilizations which they called the culture of the *Vedās* and the culture of the *Katebās*. (semi-tic books). On the one hand there was the Hindu-Buddhist-Jain civilization and culture and on the other hand there was the Judaic-Christian-Islamic culture and civilization.

### REACTIONS TOWARDS HINDU AND MUSLIM CULTURES

There is a considerable misunderstanding about Guru Gobind Singh's opinion about Muslims and Hindus and about Hinduism and Islam. In the absence of correct and authentic Sikh history, one view popularized ignorantly by a section of the Indian people is that Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa to be *chowkidars* of the weak and timid Hindus,<sup>24</sup> and he was personally a sworn enemy of the Muslims. There is not a trace of factual truth in this widely prevalent view. Guru Gobind Singh condemned hypocrisy, exclusiveness, despotism, social and political exploitation among both the Hindus and Muslims,<sup>25</sup> and whenever he found these weaknesses in his own followers he punished them very severely.<sup>26</sup> Thieves, robbers, exploiters and murderers were given retributive punishments.<sup>27</sup> When the missionary system of *masaṇds* established by Guru Amardas became corrupt after a century, Guru Gobind Singh ordered the arrest of all corrupt *masaṇds* and they were severely punished.

23. Guru Gobind Singh : *Akal Ustat*, 86.

24. Guru Gobind Singh was only in his teens when Shivaji had built the Hindu State in the South and the Rajputs had put up tough resistance.

25. *yahi kṛj dharā ham janamān, samajh leh sādhu sabh man*  
*dharm calūvan sañt ubāran, duṣṭ sabhan ko mūl upāran.*

Guru Gobind Singh : *Vichitra Natāk*, Ch. 6, 43.

26. Guru Gobind Singh ordered the arrest of his Diwan (Prime Minister) when he refused to return a copy of *Adi Granth* belonging to *udāsīs*. The *masaṇds* were severely punished as is clear from his letters.

27. *tāṅg tāṅg kar hane nidūnā, kūkar jim tin taje prānā.* *Vichitra Natāk*, Ch : 8, 38

Guru Gobind Singh looked at ancient Indian history with great pride and admiration and he was proud of his ancestral connections with Lord Rama and the *Suryavansha* dynasty.<sup>28</sup> To him the epic period of history with all its romantic weaknesses and heroic grandeur was the ideal civilization and culture when protection of society from the ravages of tyrants and preservation of the highest moral and spiritual values was foremost in the minds of the leaders. Glowing tribute has been paid to the heroes of this period, though he repeatedly adds that Rama and Krishna were great heroes but he did not accept them as incarnations of God, as God is never born in human form.<sup>29</sup>

What surprised Guru Gobind Singh was that the worshippers of warrior-prophets like Rama and Krishna, who destroyed tyrants and despots, could not raise their finger in defence of their faith and freedom. Lord Rama and Krishna who should have inspired valour and the spirit of martyrdom in the Hindus had become romantic gods before whose images the Hindus danced and wept, and submitted themselves to the worst humiliation at the hands of the invaders. The Rajputs with very few exceptions discarded their integrity and unity and even national interest for the sake of narrow selfish ends. The rulers of the twenty-two Hindu states of Shivalik, where Guru Gobind Singh established his City States were always on the side of the imperialists and the oppressors.<sup>30</sup> Guru Gobind Singh saw Hindu society crumbling and disintegrating under

28. The whole of the second, third, fourth and fifth chapters of *Vichitra Natāk* are devoted to the historical narrative describing this connection of the Guru's family with the Solar dynasty.

29. *Vichitra Natāk* 70-74 ; *Akāl Ustat* 77 ; *Ram Avatār* : 863-4

30. "The entire narrative (of Guru Gobind Singh's life) is obviously based on the single idea—the implacable hostility of the Hill Rajas to the Guru. The Mughals came as a subsidiary force ; the ferocity of the imperial officers increased as a result of their repeated failures and culminated in the execution of the Guru's innocent sons. It is a struggle primarily between the Guru and the Hill Rajas

Dr Anil Chandra Banerjee : "An Aspect of Guru Gobind Singh's Career" : *Indian Historical Quarterly* Vol 21, 1945.

the totalitarian might and the forced conversion of Aurangzeb. The heroic spirit of the epic period of Hindu history, and the passion to sacrifice everything for freedom and integrity was extinct. The weakness was inherent in the social structure of Hindu society which did not change with the changing times, inspite of periodic warnings from saints like Namdev, Ramananda and Kabir.

The fact that Guru Gobind Singh put up a bitter fight against the tyranny and oppression of Aurangzeb has created an erroneous impression that he did not trust the Muslims. If we study Guru Gobind Singh's letters to Aurangzeb we note that the Guru condemned him for being a false Muslim. Guru Gobind Singh writes : "If I had not believed in the false oaths taken on the Koran by you and your envoy I would not have crippled my army which is dearer to me than my very life (18). You are neither sincere in your faith nor do you ever practise the virtues of religion. You neither recognize any God nor do you have any inward respect for Prophet Mohammed. Outwardly you hypocritically pretend to be religious ; inwardly you are atheistic and utterly devoid of Islamic practices (46). You, O Aurangzeb, who profess belief in one God and the Koran, are utterly devoid of belief both on God and the Koran and at heart you do not have an atom of faith in them (48). The qazi who brought the letter assured me on your behalf that you actually hold me in great reverence and are prepared to act upon my advice. If there is any truth in this you should come here and show it by your actions (56). If you have any faith in peace, truth and God, then you should not hesitate to come here at once (64). If you are determined to punish the wrong doers and the oppressors, God will forgive you and bless you<sup>31</sup> (83). Guru Gobind Singh wrote these words to the man who was responsible for killing his father, mother, all the four sons, and who had destroyed his city-state and annihilated his army. He still hoped that Aurangzeb could change and become a true Muslim and act like a true Muslim. Guru Gobind Singh trusted the Muslims at the most critical hour of his life. After the battle of Chamkaur, when he was encircled by a large Mughal

31. Guru Gobind Singh : *Zafarnama* translated by Trilochan Singh.

*Sikh Review*, January, 1955.

army and the house of every Hindu in that region was slammed against him, Muslim families risked their all to protect him and help him in his escape through the encirclement. Many Muslim warriors died for the cause for which he was fighting. Thus there is not an iota of truth in the assertion that Guru Gobind Singh had created the Khalsa to fight the Muslims and when that was done their function ends.

Those were time when according to Sir John Marshall, "two civilizations, vast and strongly developed, yet so radically different, the Mohammedan and the Hindu, were meeting and mingling with each other." "The Indian and Judaic religions," says Prof. Toynbee, "are notoriously different in spirit, and wherever they have met they have behaved like oil and vinegar."<sup>32</sup> These two religious cultures had actually met in India, or should I say, clashed in what Guru Nanak called "my helpless and Godforsaken Hindustan," and for five hundred years after him, the two cultures found no common ground except to bifurcate the Hindustan of Guru Nanak. Sikh society was created to be a bridge between the two opposing forces and it is the unique privilege of every bridge to be trampled from both sides and be damned without gratitude. Such has been the fate of Sikh society and culture and yet it is a miracle that it is not dead like its fore-runners like Kabirism. The reason obviously is that it has a well-grounded social philosophy and spiritually united social order.

### THE SIKH CHURCH

In most religions the church or the temple is generally controlled by priestly orders, and is connected with rites, ceremonies and worship under the direction of priests. It is completely cut off from the social and political functions of the community. The Sikh church when founded by Guru Nanak, was called *Sangat* (congregation), the same as Buddhist *Sangha*. All the historical temples founded by Guru Nanak and his successors are known to this day as *Sangats*. Some were placed under Hindu converts and devotees while quite a number were placed under Muslim converts. Out of the first few *Sangats*

32. Toynbee's Foreword to *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, p. 9.

founded by Guru Nanak, Shaikh Sajjan near Multan, and Majnu at Delhi, and Phagu Shah at Sasram were prominent Muslim converts well known to the students of Sikh history. The Sikh church now known as the Gurdwara (lit : the door of the Guru or the temple of the Guru) is open to all Sikh and non-Sikh devotees of the Gurus. All services can be performed by the Sikh and non-Sikh devotees except the function of baptism, which can be performed by the ordained Khalsa who has lived upto the ideals.

The Sikh church is not merely a place of worship, nor is it just a forum for seeking personal salvation and blessedness, but it has stood for the total orientation of life of the individual and society towards a creative purposeful existence. While baptism was introduced by Guru Nanak and slightly modified by Guru Gobind Singh to preserve the inner core of its spirituality and mystic fervour, a number of important functions were attached to Sikh church to make it an open socio-political centre of unity and freedom. The participation in these functions was open to Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Christians from the day of its inception. I will mention two well-known institutions of the Sikh church, without understanding which it is not possible to appreciate fully the basic facts of social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh.

One such institution is the *laṅgar*, the free kitchen attached to all Sikh temples and open to all. The word *laṅgar*, and this institution has been borrowed, so to speak, from the Sufis. The *khanqāh* of the Chisti and other Sufi saints had a *laṅgar* open to the poor and the rich, though the Hindus mostly kept away from them. To make the Brahmin sit with the *pariāh* and do away with untouchability, and to make the Hindus and Muslims eat from the same kitchen and destroy all social differences between the rich and the poor, was indeed a miracle achieved by the Sikh church during those days of serious religious and social barriers between various creeds and classes. It helped to demolish the social barriers not only between the Brahmins and Sudras but also between the *malechas* and *kāfirs*. If this institution of *laṅgar* had been extended to all the Hindu temples and mosques in India on the pattern of Sikh *laṅgar*, there would not have been any Harijan (untouchable) problem

today. When Sikhs were baptised<sup>33</sup> they were made to eat in the same plate and drink from the same cup. It was this rejuvenating baptism (called in Sikh theology a spiritual rebirth) which gave a new consciousness to the downtrodden people who ate and drank with poets, warriors and leaders.

They were reborn in a new spirit and shook off their cowardice, fear and timidity and acted as leaders of the nation. Those Sudras and the down trodden people who for generations had been grovelling with fear and living like serfs, became the masters of their destiny.

When Prince Muazzam (later Bahadur Shah) was appointed Viceroy of Kabul, he started holding court by sitting on a platform erected one yard above the ground. Aurangzeb sent two strict mace-bearers to get him down from the seat in the open court and to dismantle the platform.<sup>34</sup> When Prince Muazzam ordered four drums to be beaten, Aurangzeb wrote : "In the place of drums you should beat tabors."<sup>35</sup> Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh asserted their political freedom and political sovereignty by building the *takhats* (throne), as high as that of any other Emperor, and by making the beating of very large war drums to be a part of their church service. The whole collective might of the Mughal Emperors did not dare to destroy these *takhats* and wrest from the gurus the political freedom which they exercised. Thus the Sikh church became not only the forum of social equality but of political freedom also. In the army of Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh there were many

33. Baptism of the *Charan-pahul* was introduced first by Guru Nanak : see *Janam Sākhī* : Mani Singh , *Janam Sākhī* : Meharban , Bhai Gurdas : "*charan dhoe rehrās kar, carnāmarit sikhān pilaya.*" Var 1. *Sūraj Prakāsh* tells us that before introducing the baptism of the double edged sword Guru Gobind Singh baptised through this ceremony. Rattan Rai of Kamarup was baptised in this way : "*pad arbind pakhāre, pahul dai bhāg jis bhāre.*" *Sūraj Prakāsh*. *Mehma Prakash* describes how Guru Gobind Singh first performed this ceremony of *charan pahul* for the last time and stopped it for ever in future to be replaced by the baptism of the double edged sword.

34. J. N. Sarkar : *Alkam-i-Alamgiri*, Tr. p. 58.

35. *ibid.*, p. 55.



Muslim warriors who extended their political loyalty to the Sikh gurus and not to the Mughal Emperors. Thus even the political forum of the Sikh church and Sikh society was not an instrument of power but the headquarter of national fight against tyranny and oppression, and fight for peace, harmony and equality. From the time of Guru Gobind Singh to the Anglo-Assamese wars, the Khalsa army stationed at Damdama-Dhubri in Assam, continued to help the Ahoms against the Mughals and British invaders. It was known as the Damdama Khalsa army.<sup>36</sup>

The two features of the Sikh social order are, firstly, to create social equality between the high and the low, the rich and the poor; secondly, to continuously inspire the Sikhs in particular and the masses in general to shake off slavery, fear, timid submission to the forces of evil and fight against all despotism and tyranny.

#### THE UNIFOLD SIKH SOCIAL ORDER

The Hindu social order is primarily based on "(i) the four-fold object of life (*purushārtha*), desire and enjoyment (*kāma*), interest (*artha*), ethical living (*dharma*), and spiritual freedom (*moksha*); (ii) the fourfold order of society (*varṇa*: castes), the man of learning (*Brahmin*), of power (*kshatriya*), of skilled productivity (*vaishya*), and of service (*Sūdra*); and (iii) the fourfold succession of stages of life (*āśrama*), student (*brāhmachāri*), householder (*grihastha*), forest recluse (*vānaprastha*), and the free supersocial man (*sannyāsin*). This three-fold destiny is the means to change body into soul, to discover the world's potential."<sup>37</sup>

Muslim society was also divided into four classes (i) Men of the pen (such as lawyers, divines, physicians and poets) (ii) Men of the sword (such as soldiers and fighting zealots) (iii) Men of business (merchants, capitalists and artisans) (iv) Husbandmen (such as seedman, baliffs, and agriculturists.)<sup>38</sup> In the Muslim four-fold

36. S. K. Bhuyan : *Anglo-Assamese Wars*.

37. Radhakrishnan : *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 351.

38. Jalali's Ethics (*Akhlaq-i-Jalali*) quoted by Thomsen in his *Practical Philosophy of Muhammedan people*, p 388-90.

order, it was only division of labour but all classes enjoyed social equality. The word caste as used for the four Hindu castes is itself of Portuguese origin and has been used as a translation of the Sanskrit word *varṇa* which refers to colour. Whatever was the useful purpose served by it in ancient times, during the time of the Sikh gurus it had completely degenerated into an instrument of oppression and intolerance, and it tended to, even as does so now, to perpetuate inequality and develop the spirit of exclusiveness. Persons of one caste were prohibited from sitting at meals with persons of other castes. Brahmanical autocracy was a curse on the Indian society and Guru Gobind Singh emphatically declared that he was opposed to all types of Brahmanism which he called *bīprīn kī rīt*.

Guru Gobind Singh was a very thorough exponent of the history of ancient India. He knew that caste system had never been useful, it always bred hatred and contempt. The historical struggle between Vashishtha and Vishvamitra is well known. The *dharma* of the Vaishyas (merchant class) throughout history has been making money, and they have not only practised it with vengeance but still worship only one goddess, Lakshmi (money). The Sudras have been eternal sufferers condemned for ever to ignorance, poverty and slavery. Yet the irony of Indian history is that the most enlightened philosophers have not been Brahmins but the Kshatriyas. In the Upanishad no names are more honoured than those of Janaka, and Ajatasatru. Buddha, Mahavira, Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, the fountain heads of Indian wisdom and culture were Kshatriyas by birth. Brahmin Peshwas fought as efficiently as the Kshatriyas. Chandergupta and Shivaji were Sudras.

Guru Gobind Singh not only abolished caste system, but he inspired every Sikh to be as sovereign in mind and spirit as a King, and the lowliest of the low took up the sword and performed deeds surpassing the legendary tales of medieval knights. A new fiery consciousness and the spirit rebellious was inspired to make the humblest Indian realize his inherent dignity.

The revolutionary change brought by the social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh in the mind of the humblest Indian is portrayed

by a near contemporary historian and translated by Irvine thus :  
 "A low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowliest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join the Guru's ranks, when in a short time he would return to his birth-place as its ruler with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders.....Not a soul dared to disobey an order, and men who had often risked themselves in battlefields, became so cowed down that they were afraid even to remonstrate. Hindus who had not joined the sect were not exempt from these."<sup>39</sup>

Bhai Gurdas describes this colourful change in a revolutionary way. He says, "just as a man takes up green beetle-leaf and puts into it white and brown substances, and after chewing he finds that all different colours have changed into one uniform red colour so did the Guru's faith dissolve all caste differences and make them *avarṇa*, casteless or colourless."<sup>40</sup> This casteless society was open to men of all creeds and faiths.

Sikh social philosophy is a revolutionary attempt to bridge the gulf between culturally antagonistic followers of the four Vedas and the followers of the four Katebas<sup>41</sup> (Jews, Christians, and Muslims : the four Katebas being *Tora*, *Old Testament*, *New Testament* and *Koran*).

39. William Irvine : *Later Mughals*, 98-9

40: *cār varn ik varn kar, varn avarn tamhol gulāle,*  
*aśt dhāt ik dhāt kar, ved kateb na bhed vicāle.*

Bhai Gurdās Vār 11.

*cār barn cār āśram hai ko mile gurū Gur Nānak*  
*so āp tarai kul sagal tarāvai.*

Ādi Granth N IV, Kāndā p. 1297.

*cāre paṛ dharm de cār varn ik varn karāvā*  
*kal tārān Gurū Nānak āyā,*

Bhai Gurdās Vār, 1, 23.

41. *cār varn cār mazahbā jag vic Hindu Musalmānē,*  
*khudī bakhilī takabrī, khūicōtān karen dhiñkāna,*  
*sac kināre reh gayā khex marde bāman maulāne.*

Bhai Gurdās Vār 1, 21.

The followers of these eight scriptures were like eight elements (such as copper, iron, etc.) and the aim of Sikh social philosophy was to transmute them into universal man just as the *pāras* (philosopher's stone) changes all elements into gold.<sup>42</sup> Thus the main aim of Sikh social philosophy is not only to obliterate the differences between Hindus and Muslims but also between all the faiths of the world. The Sikh gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh thus built what I would like to call universal church with unified social order.

### ETHICS OF THE SIKH SOCIAL ORDER

"It is ethical living of a Sikh that is dear to me," said Guru Gobind Singh, "and not his being a Sikh."<sup>43</sup> "Truth is higher than all," said Guru Nanak, "but higher than truth is character."<sup>44</sup> The Khalsa Holy order was based not only on the personal inspiration of Guru Gobind Singh, but on the social philosophy enunciated by *Ādi Granth*, *Dasam Granth*, and canonised scriptures like the writings of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal.<sup>45</sup> At the time of baptism the Guru gave a simplified code of conduct called *rehat*. It was orally imparted by the Guru and thence by the *Pañj Pyārās* to all the initiates. Some of the contemporary disciples of Guru Gobind Singh recorded them and they are called the *Rehatnāmās*. The most important *Rehatnāmās* are those of Bhai Nand Lal, Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Desa Singh, Bhai Chaupa Singh. These *Rehatnāmās* occupy the same place in Sikh social order as the Laws of Manu in the Hindu society and the laws of *Sharīat* in Muslim society.

The *Rehatnāmās* have a positive side, stating what a Sikh should do and a negative side stating what a Sikh should not do.

42. *cār varan cār mazahbā caran kañval sarnāgat āyā,*  
*pūras paras aparas, jag ast dhāt ik dhāt karāyā.*  
*pairīñ pāe nivāke haume rog asādhi mīāyā.*

ibid., *Vār* 12. 17.

43. *rehat pyārī moh ko sikh pyārū nāh...* Guru Gobind Singh

44. *sacōñ ore sabh ko upar sac acār*

*Ādi Granth : Guru Nānak : Sri Rāg*

45. The *Vārs* and *Kabits* of Bhai Gurdas and all the works of Bhai Nand Lal are called *prāmānik bānī* (canonized scriptures).

*It is clearly stated that for spiritual inspiration, religious practise, a Sikh should depend mainly on Ādi Granth, and God and the ten gurus should be his own objects of devotion (isṭam). A Sikh should avoid the four cardinal sins : adultery, taking intoxicants, smoking, breaking a vow or a promise."*<sup>46</sup>

"The sword" for Guru Gobind Singh, symbolized, "fearlessness, power, and victory of the good over the evil" and he made the sword a part of the social life of the Sikhs." He calls God "the wielder of sword," and the Protector with the sword.<sup>47</sup> The sword of the Sikh was always to be used for protecting higher values and never for wanton destruction or despotic power. It then ceases to be the sword of Guru Gobind Singh. The sword and spirituality (*mīrī and pīrī*) had to go hand in hand.

In India there have always been two ideals of men. One is symbolized by the *sannyāsin* (monk) or a Sufi *fakir* and the other by the *rishi* or the Kshatriya, or the warrior with the sword. The first one was symbolised by the clean-shaven head and robes of various colours while the Kshatriya ideal was symbolised by the hair and the sword. Commenting on it, Dr Radhakrishnan writes : "His *svadharma* or law of action require him to engage in the battle. Protection of right by acceptance of battle, if necessary, is the social duty of Kshatriya and not renunciation. His duty is to maintain order by force and not become an ascetic by shaving off his hair. 'O thou best of men,' says the author of Mahabharata (*Udyog Parva*) "there are only two types who can pierce the constellation of the sun and reach the sphere of Brahman. The one is the *sannyāsin* who is steeped in Yoga and the other is the warrior who falls in the battle fighting."<sup>48</sup> Guru Gobind Singh combined the holiness of the *rishi* and Christ with the social and political responsibility of the Kshatriya and gave to the world the Khalsa order of men who were saintly as well as worldly.

46. All Rehatnāmās give the greatest importance to these four cardinal sins.

47. In all his writings in the *Dasam Granth* Guru Gobind Singh calls God, Sri As (Glorious Sword), *khadag* (sword) *aspān* (wielder of sword) *khadagketu* and so on.

48. Radhakrishnan : *Gita* (Tr.), p. 112 f.n.

Says Bhai Chaupa Singh's *Rehatnāmā* : "A Sikh of the Guru should not drink wine. A Sikh should not wear the Hindu sacred thread or the *tilak*. A Sikh should not perform *mundan saṁskāras*. He should give the tithes as charity in the name of the Guru. A Sikh should not live by the profession of a priest. He should not steel or gamble. He should never turn his back to the enemy in the battlefield. A Sikh should remain detached from Hindu and Sikh creeds (*Khalsa, Hindu Musalman se nyārā rahe*). He who deceived others or breaks promises commits highly immoral acts."<sup>49</sup>

Bhai Daya Singh's *Rehatnāmā* says : "A Sikh of the Guru should not bow to graves, idols, places of pilgrimage, gods or goddesses. He should not believe in the Brahmins or the *Pirs*, nor practise any *mañtras* and *yañtras*. He should not apply his mind to *Gayatri*, or *Tarpana*. The Khalsa should dedicate his mind and soul to God. He should not wear the sacred thread or perform such ceremonies as *shradha*. All rites of birth, death, and marriage should be performed according to Sikh rites. A Sikh should help everyone in need. The rich or poor should deem each as brothers of equal status. A Sikh should not involve himself in Hindu Sikh differences and should maintain his distinct spirit (*Hindu Musalmān kī kan ko metai*). No fasts such as that of *ekadāshī* should be kept. Marriage should be performed by Anand rites (*Anaṁd binā vivāh nā kare*). He who employs a Brahmin to perform marriage rites or the last rites of a dead man will be guilty of social offence punishable by the *Saṅgat*. (*Jo sīādh bivāh brahmin se karāve, gurū kī rīt nā kare, so tankhāhyā*)<sup>50</sup>.

Thus the social barriers between various castes and creeds were broken and intermarriages took place not only between the Sikhs coming from various castes but there were marriages even between Muslim converts to Sikhism with Hindu converts. Gyani Gyan Singh in his book : "*Khālsā dhrama patitpāvan*"<sup>51</sup> gives nearly three hundred well known examples of intermarriage between Sikhs and Muslim

49. Chaupa Singh's : *Rehatnāmā*.

50. *Rehatnāmā* of Bhai Daya Singh.

51. Gyan Singh : *Khālsā Dharm Patitpāvan*, published by Anglo Sanskrit Press, Lahore .

converts to Sikhism. The Sikh social order was thus well organised through the baptism of the steel, into a well knit socio-religious and politically awake cultural community which was to remain alive for centuries to come on its remarkable social philosophy.<sup>52</sup>

### THE POWER AND GRACE OF THE PEOPLE

Guru Gobind Singh not only inspired his humblest disciples with super-human powers but disciplined in them the democratic spirit and glorified them as his master, as his friends, as his source of inspiration and strength.<sup>53</sup> For him the people, inspired by true spirituality and wisdom, were the prophets of the future and he was the first to point out in world history that the fate of future civilizations was not in the hands of mighty individuals but in the hands of morally and spiritually awake nations.

Once, when a very prominent Brahmin, Kesho Dutt, visited Anandpur, he felt insulted for not being given privileged treatment. He condemned outright and cursed, what he called the low-caste rabble, the Sikhs, who were treated better than the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Guru Gobind Singh calmly replied: "Do not blame me for ignoring you, for all are equal in my eyes. I will send you the bedding and other things you need, but do not say a word

52. When Guru Gobind Singh inaugurated the sacrament of steel he proved himself a wise and far-sighted leader. For all material things which genius has inspired with spiritual significance, steel is the truest and uncompromising. Let humanitarians prate as the will, there never has been a race who have not been purged and refined by it. In some it is the only combater of grossness and the monster of self. To the Khalsa it gave a cause and welded them into a nation.

Edmond Candler in *The Mantle of the East*.

53. *rehnī rahai soi sikh merā*  
*oh ṭhākūr, mai us kā cerā.*

*Rehatnāma* : Desa Singh.

*ioñ tisar pañṭh racūyan vad sūr gahelā,*  
*iāh iāh Gobiñd Singh āpe gcelā,*

Bhai Gurdas II, 16.

against my inspired disciples.”<sup>54</sup> Then glorifying the people, who were condemned by the Brahmin, the Guru said :

All the battles I have won against tyranny,  
I have fought with the devoted backing of these people,  
Through them only have I been able to bestow gifts.  
Through their help I have escaped harm ;  
The Love and generosity of the Sikhs  
Have enriched my heart and home.  
Through their grace I have attained all learning ;  
Through their help in battle, I have slain my enemies.  
I was born to serve them, through them I reached eminence.  
What would I have been without their kind and ready help ?  
There are millions of insignificant people like me.  
True service is the service of these people ;  
I am not inclined to serve others of higher castes.  
Charity will bear fruit in this and the next world,  
If given to such worthy people as these.  
All other sacrifices and charity is profitless.  
From head to foot, whatever I call my own  
All I possess or carry, dedicate to these people.<sup>55</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh wrote this unique “Song of the people”, glorifying their innate strength and power nearly sixty years before Rousseau wrote his ‘Social Contract’ and about 150 years before Marx formulated his Manifesto. It shows his great conviction and faith in innate strength and democratic will of the common man, in making his ideals a great social force and a cultural power.

- 54 *mero kachū aprādh nahī, gayo yād te bhūl nā kop citūro,  
bāgo nihālī paṭhāi dehūn āj, bhale tum ko nihce jiā dhāro,  
chatri sabhai krit biprin kai, inhi paṭ katāch kripākai nihāro.*

Guru Gobind Singh : *Dasam Granth.*

55. *judh jte inhi ke prasād inhi ke prasād su dān kare,  
agh augh tare inhi ke prasād, inhi ki kripā phun dhām bhare ;  
inhi ki prasād su vidyā lai, inhi ki kripā sabh satru mare,  
inhi ki kripā se saje ham hai, nahī mo se garib karor pare.  
sev kari inhi ko bhāvat aur ki sev suhāt nā ji ko  
dān dyo inhi ko bhalo, ar ān ko dān na lāgat niko ;  
āge phale inhi ko dyo jag mai jas aur dyo sabh phiko.  
mo greh mai tan te sir lau dhan hai sabh hi inhi ko.*

Guru Gobind Singh : *Dasam Granth.*



Guru Gobind Singh reports that, "the Brahmin, on hearing this, was ablaze with malice and started burning in wrath as dry grass burns in fire,"<sup>56</sup> and this has always been the reaction of bigoted Hindus towards the Sikh social order. On the other hand thousands of liberal Hindus take pride in making one son in the family a Khalsa of the Sikh Brotherhood. The cultural bonds with this section of the Hindus and the Sikhs have been deep and lasting.

In the social thought and organization of the Sikh society there is no blue print which can be proclaimed as the ideal economic plan for Sikh society, nor is there any short-cut to economic wisdom. In Sikhism spiritual values have to be incorporated in individual behaviour and social practise through whatever means the environment offers. The cleanest hands are those that work hard for their livelihood. Guru Gobind Singh once asked a large gathering that he wanted to drink water from the hands of a person who can claim his hands to be cleanest. All toiling labourers were silent, when a rich prince who boasted that his hands were soft and white and cleanest because they had not only been washed and perfumed but had never been employed in manual labour, offered a glass of water to the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh refused, saying that the hands that had never laboured for their bread, nor served humanity, are very impure. He would certainly not take water from such polluted hands. He drank water from the hands of a stable boy saying, 'blessed and pure are the hands of the labourer who works for his living.'<sup>57</sup>

"The spirit of the people" said Guru Gobind Singh, "is the spirit of God ; When anyone causes suffering to the people God's

56. *catpatāe cit mai jario*  
*trin jio krudit hoe.*

ibid.

57. *ghāl khāe kich hathoñ deh, Nānak rāh pachāne soe.*  
He who earns his living by hard work and gives something  
in charity realizes, O Nanak, the path of Truth.

*Ādi Grāñth* XI, *Sārang Vār*, p. 1245.

wrath falls on him.”<sup>58</sup> “Rulers should take a vow to do justice” said Nanak.<sup>59</sup> Never before had social consciousness been awakened so deeply and so profoundly as was done by the Sikh gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. The gurus exhorted all people to give up exploitation of the poor. They pointed out that for a Hindu to live by exploitation was like taking beef; for a Muslim it was like taking pork<sup>60</sup>, and for a Sikh it was like eating a dead man’s flesh.<sup>61</sup> Bribery and corruption is severely condemned.<sup>62</sup>

The gurus gave to the Sikhs a unique slogan : *Degh-Tegh-Fateh* : Victory to the sword of freedom, and victory to the food front (food for all). This was their economic and political plan and this is what can really bring salvation to this unfortunate land which is threatened continuously by food-shortage and aggressors on our borders.

#### WOMEN AND FILIAL PIETY

A Sikh is not supposed to renounce the world. When the siddha yogis asked the Guru how was it possible for him to live in society without being drowned in the turbulent sea of *māyā*, the Guru replied “We should live in the world of *māyā* as a swan lives on the turbulent sea and as a lotus lives in a dirty pond.”<sup>63</sup> Guru Gobind Singh advised the sannyasins to “consider the houses in the city to be forest-dwellings and remain a hermit in the heart. Eat little, sleep little and be compassionate and forgiving. Be calm and contented. The householders’ life in which one remains detached from desires is the gateway to salvation.”<sup>64</sup>

58. *khālak khalak kī jānkai, khalak dukhāvai nāh  
khālak dukhai jo Nanāi khālak kopai tāh.*

Guru Gobind Singh : *Tankhānāmā*.

59. “*rōje cūli nyāu kī*” *Ādi Grānth* NI, *Sārāṅg* 1240.

60. Bhai Gurdas, *Vār* 35, *paudī* 12.

61. *Gur pīr hāmā tā bhare je murdār nā khāe* : *Ādi Grānth* NI, *Mājh* p. 141.

62. *vadhī lai ke hak gavāe*

*Ādi Grānth* NI, *Rāmkali*, p. 951.

63. *jaise jal mai kamal nirālam murgāi nīsūnai* : Guru Nanak, *Sidh Gosht*, 5

64. *ban se sadan sabhai kar samjho man hī māh udāsā,  
alap ahār sulap si nindrā dayā chamā tan prīt  
sil sāṁtokh sadā nirbāhibo huiābo trigun atīt.*

*Dasam Granth.*

During the time of Guru Gobind Singh women enjoyed no freedom and status in society. In Sikhism woman is considered "*ardh sariri mokh duārī*" : half of man and the gateway to salvation.<sup>65</sup> Of course the gurus made it clear that only virtuous women are enlightened better-half of men. Evil minded women can be a curse to life and society, so also evil minded men bring ruin to the family and society. Equality between men and women is based on the spiritual consciousness that God alone is the *Purushā* (man) all others are His brides : *ekā purkh nār sabāī*. We are thus in no way superior to women in the eyes of God.

A householder's life is purposeful if the parents do not shirk their responsibility towards their children and the children are loyal to their parents. Perhaps Confucius alone has given such a high place to filial piety as is given in Sikhism. Bhai Gurdas, whose writings were considered, key to *Ādi Granth*, by Guru Arjan, writes :<sup>66</sup>

Discarding parents, one achieves nothing,  
Even if he hears and recites scriptures :  
Discarding parents, performing penance  
Leads to wilderness and confusion ;  
Discarding parents, if one worships gods and goddesses,  
He will acquire no merit ;  
Discarding parents if one gives charity,  
He is an ignorant fool,  
Discarding parents if one fasts,  
He falls a prey to cycle of births and deaths.  
Such a man understands not,  
Either the thought and spirit of the Guru  
Or the mystery of God.

Children, says the Guru, unite separated husband and wife just as fire unites two broken pieces of iron or copper.<sup>67</sup> The basis of

65. *lok ved gun gyān ıic ardh sariri mokh duārī*

Bhai Gurdas 16.

66. Bhai Gurdas *Vār* 37, 13.

67. *kathāñ kañcan tūle sār ; agnī gañdh pāe lohār,*  
*gori seti tute bhatār ; putūñ gañdh pavai sañsār.*

*Ādi Granth* XI, *Mājh* p. 143.

happy domestic life should be mental and spiritual unity between man and wife. They should be two bodies but one in spirit : *ek jot doe mūrtī*. Just as a broken arm cannot be completely healed, the bonds of love between husband and wife once snapped can never be properly healed. Love can be broken even by wrathful speech.<sup>68</sup>

Sikh women have played a great part in the history of the Sikhs. When Guru Gobind Singh was quite young, the administration of the Guru's durbar was conducted by his mother, Mata Gujri, as is clear from some of her letters now available. After the death of Banda, for nearly two decades the Sikh community was guided by Guru Gobind Singh's wife Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Kaur, the Holy Mother of the Khalsa. I have some letters of both these great women of Sikh history indicating that they guided and maintained contacts with the Sikhs of far flung areas like Kabul, Pak Pattan, Patna and Dacca.

The marriage ceremony in Sikhism is so simple and open that it is common knowledge that when Hindu or Muslim actors and actresses in Bombay wish to perform inter-community marriages they go to the Sikh temple. The Sikhs perform the same ceremony at the time of birth, and death and that is the reading of the *Adi Granth* and distribution of sweet pudding and food. There are no other rites and ceremonies. While saying our congregational prayers we remember not only our own gurus and martyrs but also the saints, seers, *hathīs* (those performing *hatha yoga*), *japīs* (those who meditate on Him in one way or the other), *tapīs* (those who perform penance), of all lands. In the end, no Sikh prays on for himself, but he wishes well to the whole humanity : *sarbat dā bhalā*. Out of 146 missionaries appointed by Guru Amar Das, 52 were women. Never in the history of India had women been given such august position in religious and cultural administration. The

68. *tūte neh ke bole sahī*  
*tūte bāh dohun dīs galī*  
*tūt prait gāi bur bol*  
*durmat parhar chadī dhol*

*Ādi Granth* : Nanak I, *Ramkalī Dakhui, Onikār*.

whole of Kashmir and Kabul were under women provincial heads.

Besides creating an ideal man and an ideal society the social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh aimed at uniting all mankind in elementary, thoughtful, ethical and spiritual righteousness. If we are not to be ruined materially and spiritually we have to seriously consider the problems of equality, social justice, and political freedom not only for our own community, country and nation, but for all suffering humanity. No section of mankind should become ruinous to any other through superior economic or physical power. Guru Gobind Singh believed that spirituality must transform man from within, before politics transforms him from without. Both must go hand in hand. A number of communities have lived in India for centuries. They have passively tolerated one another just as one tolerates necessary evils. They have never opened healthy dialogue between one another for which Sikhism has always strived. They have never tried to own and assimilate the best that is in others. Still the worst feature of the present day situation is that extremely selfish and corrupt politicians are accepted and honoured as champions of religion and social culture. These champions of darkness first destroyed the cultural and spiritual bonds between the Hindus and Muslims resulting in the partition of the country, and now they are destroying the spiritual and cultural bonds between the Hindus and Muslims. The social philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh impels us to study all religions in their true spirit and show reverence for them all. The search for Truth which is one, the love of God which is one, and service of humanity which is one should bring religions and mankind closer to one another and weld them into one world-family. Guru Gobind Singh's life, his mission, and his social philosophy repeatedly remind us that Man is of one human race and the search for the light and love of God is a universal quest in which all paths have to march towards one and the same goal as comrades and not as enemies or rivals :

Some call themselves Hindus,  
Others call themselves Musalmans,  
And yet Man is of one human race all over the world.

## GURU GOBIND SINGH'S PHILOSOPHY OF VALUES

**Wazir Singh**

THE short span of Guru Gobind Singh's life was a constant challenge to the Mughal empire entrenched in India. He departed from the general line of passive protests and pacifism, adopted by generations of native communities and his own predecessors, in relation to the State policy. A parallel to the Guru's armed action is available in his contemporary Shivaji's performance, who threw the gauntlet to Aurangzeb's military might. In our own day, Subhash Chander Bose challenged the British empire with a handful of trained and disciplined sons of the soil, simultaneously with the experiment of passive resistance being conducted on a massive scale. In each case, it was the concrete situation and the circumstances which prompted leaders of men to take to the sword.

It may be surmised that the martyrdom of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, under orders of Aurangzeb, led Guru Gobind Singh to rise in revolt against the Mughal power. • He might have felt within him an impulsion to crush the headstrong ruling hierarchy. But it may not exactly have been a feeling of vengeance. It was righteous indignation at the cowardly and dastardly execution of his father and Guru. It was the sort of reaction that swayed the best part of Indian nation at Bhagat Singh's execution. It is interesting to note that Guru Gobind Singh's grandfather had also organized an armed band following the tortures leading to death of his father, Guru Arjan, during Jehangir's regime. The precedent may have provided a cue and added strength to the Guru, who had definitely imbibed anti-feudal spirit of Guru Nanak and his successors. It was thus not a question of personal feelings alone ; motivation for military preparedness and armed operations came from the totality of conditions coupled with foresight. The Guru decided to make

'hawks' out of 'doves', by inspiring them with a fresh mode of thinking and acting.

### CREATIVE ESSENCE AND VALIANCE

A unique stroke of creative genius was invoking the stubborn aspect of the supreme spirit. He called it by the epithet of 'all-steel' or 'double-edged sword'. It is significant that in a country with centuries of spiritualist tradition behind, Guru Gobind Singh saw fit to infuse the new animation into his companions, through the familiar language of theology and mythology. Although his cosmology and theory of existence lend themselves to conflicting interpretations, the broad features of his metaphysics leave the following impress: The Absolute is formless and featureless, colourless and casteless. Not a quality can we attribute to it; 'Neti, Neti' is the cry defying all description of it. This side of the picture refers to the *essence*, the non-existent Being. The other side is material existence, physical universe, or creation. It is the negation of Neti, and affirmation of the expressiveness of the Absolute. The two notions of reality adumbrated here roughly correspond to the inescapable bifurcation involved in idealistic and monistic systems; for instance in Plato's eternal world of ideas and transitory world of sense; in Kant's Noumena, or things-in-themselves, in contrast to phenomena, or things as known to us; in Hegel's doctrine of the Absolute Idea and its dialectical negation. The bifurcation of *reality* and *appearance* occurs in Shankar's system of Brahmin and Maya, or the supra-personal characters of the Absolute. It re-appears in Guru Nanak's *satya* of formless being and the physical vortex or Truth as revealed to man. In other words, Guru Gobind's conception of the supreme spirit follows the traditional philosophical distinction between the ontological 'reality' and the epistemological 'truth'. He also characterizes the spirit as *Kaal* (Time) in temporal sense, and *Akaal* (Eternity) in transcendent

Dr S. Radhakrishnan says: "The absolute is the prius of all actuality and possibility. This universe is for the absolute only one possibility. Absolute is the pre-cosmic nature of God, and God is the Absolute from the cosmic point of view".

Guru Nanak and his successors had resolved the opposition between the formless 'essence' and physical 'existence' by the formula of essence-in-existence, which they termed *Nām*. Dialectically speaking, the Brahmin and its antithesis (the phenomenal world) dissolve in the synthesis of space-time matrix throbbing with spirit. Guru Gobind Singh seems to have invested this *spirit* with creative values. He counts the 'attributes of Truth in terms of activities and acts in his verse 'Jaap'. The essential, creative principle operating in the universe is the reservoir of all values. Men have invoked different sets of values at different stages of human history. Prophets have emphasized, in consonance with the need of their times, various aspects of the divine essence permeating the space-time framework. Guru Gobind Singh brought into focus the value of an inviolate force and presented it in terms of 'wielder of the sword' and 'all steel'.

The ideal of the almighty deity had been postulated several times before the advent of Guru Gobind Singh, in order either to inspire men to be brave and mighty, or to instil awe of God's majesty into their minds. The Guru held the ideal of powerful master with a view to encouraging virtues of fortitude and valour in his followers. He bent all efforts in this direction. He prescribed a daily programme of drill and practice of the arms. (It is well known that Gandhiji too recommended a routine—that of the spinning wheel—to propagate swadeshi and fight the alien rule). The Guru managed to secure all the necessary equipment for his soldier devotees, including horses and a big drum, the Ranjit Nagārā. Development of the physique was the order of the day.

### THE DEAR AND THE BEAUTIFUL

Such insistent emphasis on physical culture might suggest as if the Guru was intent on producing a Spartan community in the hilly tracts of Punjab. It is true that he desired to reshape subjugated sections of population and prepare them for the struggles ahead. But he never chose the physical aspect of culture to the exclusion and at the expense of all other aspects. If he would be remembered for his cult of heroism, he would all the more be remembered for



his cult of love. If he was a statesman and a patriot, he was also a poet of high order, and spiritual leader in direct succession to Guru Nanak. He did not preach mere 'meditation with closed eyes', in total oblivion of the world around. He proclaimed from the house-top :

Listen all of you, I verily speak :  
Those alone realize the Lord, who tread the path of love.

Beside valour, he therefore placed the virtue of love. In the order of values, he made a significant addition—he showed the friendly, lovable aspect of the Spiritual Being. In a beautiful Punjabi lyric, he gives poetic expression to his emotion in relation to his darling deity :

Let Friend, the dear, be informed  
How His seekers live along.  
'Apart from Thee, quilt-comforts are sore,  
And snake-bite the homes.  
Knife-edge the cup, bottle like a thorn,  
Sāqi's beckoning : butcher's sword'.  
Heavenly is my Darling's yard,  
Hell with the Alien's abode.

Aesthetic quality and poetic values of his times are abundantly present in this lyric. The Guru seems fully alive to the Persian and Mughal traditions of poetry, and makes a mention of (the rejected) cosy bed-rooms, bottle of wine, the cup, and slanting eyes of the Sāqi, thereby heightening the effect of poignancy resulting from temporary lack of contact with the Dear Lord.

#### SAINT-SOLDIER

Among the pre-disposing causes of the Value - philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh had been the saintly heritage of Guru Nanak and Kabir. While he accepted the challenge posed by the ruling power, and adopted the posture of strength, he attempted a dovetailing of saintly and soldierly virtues. He seems to have foreseen the crumbling edifice of the Mughal rule, weakening of the country's defences and

possibility of fresh foreign invasions. He therefore decided to bring up a generation of not only freedom-fighters and protectors, but also of morally fortified individuals. The danger was obvious. His followers, when they got an upper hand, would possibly fall a prey to corruption and moral degeneration. He was of course in a great hurry ; there was no time to lose. No broad-based, long-term plan could be effectively carried out on the lines of Buddha and Nanak. An expedient had to be worked out rather quickly. The result was a re-cast ritual of baptism, vows of personal discipline, and certain forms of self-denial for one who joined the brotherhood of Khalsa. While it is true that Guru Gobind Singh decried ostensible ritual and empty formalities in the performance of religious duties, he was justified in combining a measure of custom with reflection. The soldier-saints were to be moulded out of human material, which was on the whole naive and simple, and partly steeped in make-believe and superstition. Even modern education and technique have not rid society of ignorance, conventional rites and rituals and corrupt practices. The Guru flourished than three centuries before our times.

#### TRUTH AND TEMPERANCE

The circumstances warranted a moral code. Apart from practising the routine of physical culture, and reading the sacred word, the disciple was enjoined to cultivate purity and truthfulness in personal life, as well as democratic virtues and co-operation in corporate life. For instance, it was nothing short of a radical departure from the prevailing feudal morality to insist on chastity and monogamy. While it can be said that love between man and woman was made respectable when ideas of western democracy came to be assimilated, honest and decent men even in feudal age had been convinced of the necessity of integrity in married life. Normal status of woman was never equal to the status of man in those pre-democratic ages. It is a tribute to the fair-minded approach and democratic vision of Guru Gobind Singh to recognize in him the precursor of a new moral code based on mutual loyalty and love. He presented the ethics of married life in the form of an oath administered to him by his Guru-father :

Since the days I came of age  
 My Teacher so advised :  
 Ever keep this vow, my son !  
 As long your life abides :  
 Affection for your wife  
 Must ever be on increase,  
 Never should dream adulterous  
 Even by error arise.

Never had the women of the world a greater champion and defender of their cause in the person of a man, throughout the ancient and medieval periods.

Implications of such a social code were far-reaching. For one thing, the commandment was addressed to the male partner, admitting thereby the inherent polygamous inclinations in man's instinctive make-up. But acceptance of the efficacy of self-discipline and intelligent control of the impulsive life is a significant part of the whole scheme. Secondly, the institution of family and marriage is upheld. No self-denial or eradication of normal human emotions was preached. The teaching points to the cardinal virtue of temperance, recommended in all matters of bodily pleasure. Enumerating qualities of a truly contemplative life, he counted three hedonistic disciplines: moderation in eating (*alap ahaar*), moderate sleep (*sulap nindra*) and chastity in sex-life (*sheel*). Extending this principle to other motives, he counselled control over egoism, anger, infatuation and dogmatic tendencies.

Relevance of the virtue of chastity and integrity can be better appreciated in the present age, when the environment is full of temptations, distractions and opportunities for immodest living, to an extent that never was. These qualities of character derive from the over-all virtue of truthfulness, which in turn is an expression of Truth as one of the supreme values reflected in human life. Gandhiji's insistence on Truth as the highest value and its expression in the form of non-violence in human character, can be better understood in this light. In its broadest sense non-violence is equal to truthfulness; it takes the form of purity in reflective life, honesty in mutual relations and justice in social context. Cognitively, pursuit of truth means acquisition of knowledge and gathering of wisdom. Guru

Nanak had used the symbol of Veda for wisdom, and called it an instrument for bringing about fulfilment in life. Guru Gobind Singh likewise accorded a high place to the instrument of wisdom contained in the scriptures. His efforts at translating the Puranic, mythological literature, and encouragement provided to the poets and elite of his court in maintaining high levels of learning are eloquent testimony to his faith in wisdom.

### ETHICS OF DEMOCRACY

Let us turn to the values of social and corporate life. The trio of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity has been famous enough in modern times since French Revolution. But its Indian counterpart, the democratic values enunciated and promoted in practice by Guru Gobind Singh, are not so well known. Perhaps the followers of Sikh tenets did not realize the great academic significance of the institutions set up by the Guru. Moreover, India lagged behind Europe in the introduction of industrial relations and the accompanying democratic processes. Soon after the departure of Guru Gobind Singh from the scene, feudal forces and elements in Sikh society gained dominance and control over weaker sections. Political instability, bitter animosity against Sikh movement and the ensuing struggle for existence of the community during 18th century, contributed to the neglect of these values. It will not be a travesty of truth to say that the rule of Ranjit Singh over Punjab and other north-western territories, was after all a rule of feudal power. Now that the democratic experiment has been conducted, and people have become alive to the values of democracy, the foresight and zeal of Guru Gobind Singh can be properly appreciated. Even if we do not dilate upon the economic and historical factors, we cannot deny that the following principles and institutions were established by Guru Gobind Singh :

(1) *Work*. They used to call it *kirt*, that is labour done by hand. The Guru desired to make work 'the prime want of life' as Karl Marx characterized it. He forbade parasitism of all types. 'Do honest labour and earn livelihood'—was the instruction. This forms part of the daily prayer, the *ardāsa*.

(2) *Welfare.* The order was to contribute 10 percent of one's earnings to the common fund, to be utilized for welfare activities. Schools, free kitchens for pilgrims and *sarais* were attached to religious centres. Owing to lack of popular vigilance, such funds were of course misused and misappropriated occasionally. But the nobility of motive behind the precept can hardly be questioned. Besides, all able-bodied individuals were enjoined to do some manual labour daily for the benefit of community. This included cleaning of utensils, sweeping of shrine premises, arranging for the comforts of pilgrims and so on.

(3) *Equality before the Guru and the congregation.* This was a healthy socializing practice. It accelerated liberation from the caste-shackles. None was inferior before the Guru ; congregation was a brotherhood of equals. But this cannot be construed as a step towards classless organization of society. No conscious or systematic attempt was made to abolish economic differences or vocational pursuits of any kinds.

(4) *Executive Council.* A special democratic procedure established by Guru Gobind Singh was nomination of an executive, consisting of 'five chosen ones', like *pañchās* in Panchayati Raj system. All matters of vital importance to the community were to be referred to this council for deliberation and formulation of concrete proposals. The entire congregation was expected to participate in the popular voice-vote on these proposals, which were carried by *sarab-samiti* (unanimity) or *bahu-samiti* (majority decision). The congregation was the prototype of modern general assembly. Difficulties were bound to arise in this case too. Power motive, lack of systematic education in democratic procedures, and concentration of funds in a few hands sometimes led to denial of democracy. Moreover, which five were the truly representative 'chosen ones' for the entire community ?

(5) *Humanism.* Role of a prophet or religious teacher is not limited to satisfactory interpretation of God's qualities ; he must put *man* in the centre and use his good offices to bring him solace and salvation. Guru Gobind Singh is one of those spiritual leaders who acted not only on religious plane, but on social and political planes, to

ameliorate the lot of fellow humans. Guru Gobind Singh addressed himself to man *qua* man, without the narrow distinctions and antagonisms of East and West, Hindu and Muslim, Masjid and Mandir. West was not so prominent a factor of influence in India, during the 17th century. Nevertheless, writings and teachings of the Guru resound with international, humanitarian overtones. The action of Bhai Kanahya, who supplied water to the injured soldiers, irrespective of their affiliations, won whole-hearted approval of the Guru. It would certainly claim approval of bodies like International Red Cross today. The Guru's quarrel with the unjust oligarchy did not estrange him from non-Sikh or non-Hindu sections of humanity. Concern for man and his welfare is the firm foundation of Guru's social philosophy; he beseeched the Lord for bestowing upon him strength to perform right actions alone.

An interesting narration of cosmological creation is found in the poetry of *Dasam Granth*. The Absolute-creator did not install man on the earth straightaway. He experimented with Demons, Angels, Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma and rest of the deities. Then he created man, followed by sages, saints and prophets. None acquitted himself satisfactorily in the eyes of the creator-lord. It is with such an awareness and a cosmological point of view that Guru Gobind Singh set out on the mission of raising the status of man and values human. A cosmology or a science may exclude man from its purview, logic may not deal with human passions, metaphysics may concern itself with non-human, 'objective' values, but the fact remains that all knowledge is human, all studies and sciences are creation of the human mind. Knowledge of universal truths, even though without reference to human existence, is in some sense meant for 'human' consumption. A proposition about the cosmos, or the Absolute, or God, is after all a 'proposition' formulated by a thinking mind and intelligible to such a mind. That is why, in the order of values humanity comes first and human psychology becomes indispensable for the readings of non-human facts of astronomy, physics or biology. The Guru, who was essentially an educationist, never lost sight of such considerations while accumulating wisdom of various regions for the benefit of man.

## BLISS AND FEARLESSNESS

The eventful life-story of Guru Gobind Singh spotlights another great value. It is equipoise ; that blissful state of being which the Guru maintained in most abnormal and trying circumstances. It is a tribute to his well-balanced, rational outlook on life to recognize that he did not commit the 'genetic fallacy'. (We all knew Hitler and Nazis condemned relativity theory just because its author was a Jew). "The division of whole populations into 'good' and 'bad' is a childish habit fostered by fairy tales", says Bertrand Russell. "We are all of us a mixture of good and bad, and there is not a preponderance of good on the side of those who are filled with self-righteousness...Enmity is folly, since nine-tenths of the interests of rival nations are identical. All can be happier if they forget their quarrels." Doubtlessly, the Guru would have shared these sentiments. Of course we admire his bravery, his heroism, and his fearlessness. Yet he was primarily and fundamentally a man of peace. Resort to force was necessitated by the pressure of circumstances. As he said, the goddess of Durga was created in order that the monsters could be punished and exterminated. Almost in the midst of battles and war-cries, he could carry on with the production and translation of literary works and writing of sublime verse with perfect equanimity. The historic second edition of the *Ādi-Graṇth* was compiled at Damdama Sahib, while he was migrating from Punjab to the South, virtually surrounded by hostile Mughal forces. His well-known *Zafarnāmā* in Persian verse, addressed to Aurangzeb, was written while he was actually taking shelter in a village, hotly pursued by enemy regiments.

Professor Hinshaw commented about Albert Einstein, that "with Gandhi he would recommend passive resistance. But unlike Gandhi, he believes in passive resistance only up to a certain point... If military fascism tries to destroy the intellectual class of any given society, then violence is not only fully justified, but actually necessary". Non-violence was not a creed with Guru Gobind Singh, nor was violence adopted for the fun of it. It was actually necessary, since the violent violation of the traditional Indian way of life was impossible to stop by any other means. Execution of Guru Tegh

Bahadur had brought the matters to brink. His martyrdom was the last word in passive resistance ; just as the apostle of non-violence in our times, Mahatma Gandhi, fell a prey to violence. Such events naturally give a jolt to sensible minds. As Gandhi attached high degree of value to fearlessness, so had Guru Tegh Bahadur held fearlessness in high esteem. His worthy son, Gobind Singh, literally acted on the principle enunciated by him :

Not to frighten anyone,  
Nor to be afraid !

This sort of morale could well become a motto for international conduct, and nations of the world may profitably adopt such a principle for mutual relations.

### ENLIGHTENMENT

Religious persecution was not the only evil which the Guru fought and countered. He acted with equal measure of vigour and crusading spirit in the region of ignorance and superstition. He reproached those 'who worship stones and place them on their heads'. He criticized those 'who put shiva-lingam around their necks', those who 'salute effigies' those who 'bow before dead bodies' and foolishly indulge in such thoughtless deeds in search of God. He did not permit worship of graves and tombs, or observance of *jantra*, *mantra*, *tantra*. He even remarked—God is not in the sacred books, neither in *Purān* nor in *Qurān*. He exhorted men to think straight. "Let passions be subordinated, let reason dominate"—this forms part of the daily prayer prescribed by the preceptor. His aspiration was to compose a community of clear-headed, enlightened individuals. Guru Nanak had offered the concept of Brahm-Gyani, or one possessed of divine wisdom. For, says Sri Aurobindo, "An ignorant half-knowledge cannot follow the motions of an All knowledge." Enlightenment was indeed one of the cherished virtues the Guru desired to promote in life.

It is a sad commentary on our social dynamics of the past two or three centuries that the good work done by the gurus was



practically lost upon us. Guru Nanak was born in 1469, that is exactly four hundred years earlier than the birth of Mahatma Gandhi in 1869. The movement initiated by Nanak and Kabir to discredit caste system and bring about cultural renaissance in India was continued by the succeeding gurus; it blossomed in Guru Gobind Singh's time. But the rot soon set in. Gandhi had to start the struggle all over again, to rejuvenate the set of values suspended in the intervening decades, to lay the foundations of a society in which all men are brothers. If the intellectual leaders of international society, if bodies like UNESCO are inspired by the ideal of a brave new world, and if they are really keen to convert their utopian dreams into living reality, they cannot afford to ignore the rich heritage of generations past, they cannot help feeling proud of the contributions made to cultural and spiritual uplift of mankind by enlightened leaders of all nations, they cannot dispense with re-examination and re-evaluation of the principles of dignified human conduct, enunciated by savants like Guru Gobind Singh.

It is not enough to celebrate centenaries of greatmen's births, and to feel complacent that sufficiently large numbers of men and women have turned out to pay homage to them. It is of course necessary to commemorate the events in a befitting manner. Yet the supreme task of scholars and intellectuals, in this regard, cannot be other than probing the wisdom of the truly wise, and communicate it, with perfect intellectual honesty, to as wide a public as possible. They would certainly feel inspired by the great utilitarian ideal set before us by Guru Gobind Singh, the ideal of Universal Welfare, or *sarbat kā bhalā*.

SIKHISM  
AND INDIAN SOCIETY

19 JUNE, 1966



## THE IMPACT OF ISLAM ON SIKHISM

**Abdul Majid Khan**

THE advent of Islam in India shook up Hinduism in two ways and it is a matter of history that these ways were contrary to each other. On the one side, Hinduism became quite conservative; it hardened and retired into a shell in order to protect itself against the onslaught on it. Caste became stiffer and more exclusive; the *purdah* and the seclusion of women became common. On the other hand, there were definite stirrings of internal revolt against caste and too much *puja* and ceremonies.

It is undeniable that right from the earliest times, reformers have appeared in India, who tried to rid Hinduism of its abuses. Buddha was the greatest of them all. In the eighth century there was Shankaracharya and in the eleventh century, Ramanuja a Vaishnavite and a man of deep faith. After Islam had settled down in India, a new type of reformer rose among the Hindus as well as among the Muslims. He tried to bring the two religions nearer to each other, by stressing the common features of both and attacking their external observances. An effort was, thus made to bring about a synthesis of the two.

Ramanand, who lived in the south of this country in the fourteenth century was the first celebrated teacher who preached this synthesis. He rose against caste and ignored it altogether. Among his disciples was a Muslim weaver, named Kabir, who became even more famous later on. Kabir's songs in Hindi are very well known in remote villages in the northern part of India. He was, in a way, neither Hindu nor Muslim, for he was both and his followers came from both religions and from all castes. He was a most powerful exponent of devotional faith, centred in an impersonal, transcendental God. Love of God and man was his religion.

There were a number of teachers whose point of view was similar to that of Kabir and who founded their orders in different parts of the country. Among them were Malukdas, Dadu Dayal, Virbhan, Pran Nath and others.

In the Punjab, Guru Nanak founded the Sikh religion. He was one of those great reformers who tried to find a common platform between Hinduism and Islam. His nine successors nourished his faith and the last of them, Guru Gobind Singh, transformed Sikhism into a military mission, in order to resist political oppression and tyranny.

### ISLAMIC IDEALS

It is a bit difficult to adequately assess the import of the impact of Islam on Sikhism, without understanding the significance of the ideals of Islam.

The word 'Islam' literally means peace, the way to peace and submission to the will of God. Islamic life, thus, is a life of attainment of 'falah' which means the furrowing out of latent faculties. Islam enjoins upon human beings to continuously strive for betterment, for progress, controlled by righteousness. It swears by four types of unity: unity of God, unity of mankind, unity of religion and unity of classes. Allah, according to Islam is God, Who is invisible in person, and Who has no partner. He is matchless and "naught is of his likeness." He is the light of the heavens and the earth. He is the glorious, the magnificent and the beautiful. God is truth. From the unity of the creator, proceeds the unity of the divine purpose. To live in a universe, ruled by caprice or chance is a psychological nightmare. The cosmos is a moral order and in the words of Tennyson, "Yet I doubt not that through the ages an increasing purpose runs."

Islam regards the whole of mankind as an organic unity, a vast brotherhood, 'under heaven, there is but one family.' It repudiates the distinction on the mundane plane, the distinction of colour, language or territory cannot and should not form the ground for

claims of superiority of one group over the other. The only distinction that has worth or value is that which arises on the moral and the spiritual planes, namely, the distinction of piety and righteousness, which in turn, does not deprive the non-possessors of their basic human rights.

According to Islam, God raised His prophets and messengers from time to time and in various climes, and revealed His guidance to them, for transmission to humanity. Coming from basically the same source, the ever-vital fountain-head, all religions are, in reality, one and the same, in as much as they revolve round 'submission to His will.' The revealed guidance was at times lost or corrupted through overgrowth, excrescences and human interpolations; so new prophets with fresh interpretations of the old fundamentals were sent. Mankind, thus, continued to advance from infancy to maturity.

Islam stands for the creation of a classless society by eliminating all possible social conflicts and ending all clashes and resolving different disputes peacefully. It insists on class collaboration and mutual cooperation. In the sphere of economics, Islam lays down that it is not in the interest of humanity if wealth continues to circulate among the wealthy only and it, thus, envisages, through its laws and institutions, a "cooperative commonwealth of talents." In the domain of politics, Islam is for the right type of socialism. The Islamic State should be a welfare state, a socialistic state, where no human being has a right to govern other human beings in an arbitrary and despotic manner. It stands for the rule of law and not even the head of the State is above that rule of law. Absolute justice in the field of economics and politics, civic and social behaviour, is the watchword, while the establishment of righteousness and the promotion of human happiness is the goal. In the words of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, "It is the glory of Islam, that, in practice as well as in theory, it tolerates no distinction between the white man and the black, between one race and another, and between the dwellers in various climes. The oneness of God and the essential oneness of humanity and the possibility of the attainment of salvation, by rigid adherence to a few plain truths and to the

practice of restraint and benevolence, were never more consistently and more successfully preached and broadcast than by prophet Muhammad."

### GURU NANAK

The beginning of the 16th century was the era of religious reform and what Luther did in Europe, Nanak did in India. Guru Nanak was an ideal unitarian. He fervently believed in One Absolute God. "The *dharma* of all men is one *dharma*, if one understands the secret. One God is the God of all gods. From that God is the soul. If one understands the secret of the indweller of all souls, one becomes a bright god. Nanak is his servant." Guru Nanak was pre-eminently the prophet of peace and unity. His efforts for creating an atmosphere for world reconciliation and world amity were much in advance of the age in which he lived. For all the religions of the world, he envisaged a fellowship of faiths. He was of the considered view that the unity of religions was something unreal till human beings believed in monotheism and regarded God as the sole fountain head, the eternal spring of all life and light, glory and grace. If God is one, all souls are from Him and of the same essence. How could the ways to realize Him be different for different souls? The natural corollary to monotheism is oneness of humanity. Guru Nanak rightly remarked, "the true God is one who uniteth all." In the words of Guru Arjan Dev, "There is one father and we are all His children." Prophet Muhammad says in a similar strain, "No other than but one community, all human beings who-soever are indeed." Again, "All mankind is the family of God, and he is the most beloved of God who does the greatest good to His children." The tenth Guru observed, "The *puya* and *namaz* are the same; a Muslim mosque and a Hindu temple are both houses of God, Know Ye, all humanity belongs to one caste."

No wonder, the founder of Sikhism, denounced idolatry and ritualism. This was something truly Islamic. Guru Nanak was atonce a liberating and a renewing force. He freed his followers from caste restrictions, for he knew that caste had all along been the bane of India. Prayer is just a form when our mouths are

uttering the words, but our soul is wondering elsewhere. Charity practised for vanity and show is only a form, which can hardly do any body any good. Guru Nanak hit the nail on the head when he said : "Religion consisteth not in patched coat, nor in a yogi's staff, neither in ashes smeared over the body. Religion consisteth not in earrings worn, or in a shaven head, or in blowing of horns. Abide in God amid the temptations of this world ; thus, shalt thou find the way to religion."

Indeed, there is a striking similarity in the Islamic-Sikh conception of God as well as in the views of Muhammad and those of Nanak regarding the oneness of mankind, i.e., about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of mankind.

#### DHARAM YUDH

Islam as well as Sikhism suggest resistance to unrighteousness and constant adherence to truth. In popular parlance, both the creeds stand for social, economic and political justice. The *jihad* of Islam and *dharam yudh* of Sikhism mean that when the use of non-violence, sweet reasonableness, gentle persuasion and mild arguing fail to bring about a change of heart in the oppressors, it is perfectly legitimate to resort to armed resistance.

The Prophet till his flight from Mecca to Medina explored all peaceful avenues to come to a just settlement with his opponents but to no purpose. After his arrival in Medina he was compelled to take up arms in order to vindicate the cause of truth and justice. All the gurus except Guru Gobind Singh believed in passive resistance. The tenth guru held "When other remedies fail, it is justified to unsheath the sword." The glory of Guru Gobind Singh was that even when forced by the pressure of circumstances to fight, he never ignored human values and never swerved from the path of truth and love.

The Qur'ān says, "Only doth God forbid you to make friends with those who, on account of your religion, have waged war against you, and have driven you forth from your homes and have



aided those who drove you forth ; and whoever maketh friends of them are wrong-doers." In other words, Islam as well as Sikhism permit fighting only in defence of one's religion, which in the final analysis stands for justice and truth. War is hell, it is, normally speaking, something evil, but there are worse things than war. Both Islam and Sikhism believe in the maxim, "non-violence if possible, armed resistance to tyranny and oppression if necessary."

### WORSHIP

The impact of Islam on India changed the popular Hindu conception of God. In the words of Dr. Sampurnanand, "There was the impact of Islam. By a natural process not difficult to understand, the virile God of the conqueror over-shadowed the impersonal Paramatma and the Isvara that emerged was very much an image of the God of the Hebrews, the Christians and the Muslims. The *bhakti* cult which grew into a powerful tree in the fertile soil, provided by the minds of the decadent and suppressed Hindus of the day, added to His (God's) stature. He could now grant prayers and forgive sins and liberation from re-birth, could come through His grace. He could now be quite correctly described as 'Potent to act, not to act and to act in the opposite way,' viz., contrary to the established rules governing the normal working of the universe, the laws of nature and of morality."

Islam and Sikhism clearly declare that God is omnipresent and pervades the universe. Both the creeds accept the transcendental and imminent aspects of the divinity. While Sikhism names God as *Satnam*, the Qur'ān calls God as *Alleha-al-Haq*, both meaning God is the truth.

Guru Nanak as well as his successors also described God by names familiar to Muslims as Karim, Rahim, Rab and Razak. In both religions there is a striking similarity in the mode of offering congregational prayer, the ablution preceding, the reverential attitude in standing, the bowing down, the kneeling with the forehead placed on the ground and the sitting posture. It is, however, significant to note that while the Sikh religious congregations are open to the

womenfolk, who are allowed to join freely in all religious observances along with men, in Islam women are not admitted in public for prayer, they perform the devotions at home and if they visit a mosque, they must do it when men are not there.

Guru Nanak praised the Muslim habits of regular prayer very much, but he was of the opinion that the Muslims would do well to grasp the purport of their prayer. This could be done only when they would cultivate practically the five virtues which were associated with them. He says: *Panj Nimazan Panj Wakt*—Muslims offer five prayers to God daily. And five are the names that have been given to them. The first means truth; the second, honest livelihood; the third, good wishes for all the people of God; the fourth, mental sincerity or clear conscience; and the fifth, appreciation of God's praise. "But he alone is a true Muslim, who practises their essence, with that spirit of belief in one God, which is based on right action. Otherwise, those who are false, get nothing but false position in life."

Prayer is an established institution of religion. In Islam it is not the mere observance of the form, but the keeping of it in a right state, i.e., being true to the spirit of the prayer. The object of the prayer is the purification of the heart. The Qur'ānic words are, "There is no piety in turning your faces towards the East or West, but he is pious who (truly) believeth in God." \*And "woe to those who pray, but in their prayers are careless. Who make a show of devotion, but refuse to help the needy." Besides, purification of the heart, prayer must stress the need of service to humanity. Prophet Muhammad says, "God truly loves those who do good to others "

While the ideal of service is stressed in almost all the living religions of the world, it has a special significance for the Sikhs. To quote I. B. Banerjee, "In spite of the fact that the ideal of service and the inculcation of a spirit of brotherhood were equally significant features of almost all the schools of religious revival in contemporary India, it was in Sikhism alone that a sense of corporate unity gradually evolved."

## INFLUENCE ON CULTURE

Culture is the organic spirit of a society which is sufficiently cohesive to have character and sufficiently diversified to express itself. Thus, that group is cultured which fulfills in the human world those conditions which make evolution possible. On the one hand, a species which adheres rigidly to type eventually dies when conditions and surroundings change. On the other hand, that which lacks stability and shoots off into strange freaks also perishes in a law-abiding world. To go a step lower, what is true of species, is true of the individual organism. And nations are but a conglomeration of individuals. In an ever-changing world, they must have dynamic stability. Indeed, culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by men as members of society.

A critical study of the history of the Sikhs reveals that Sikhism was a determined attempt at the synthesis of Islam and Hinduism. A sect of dissenters in the beginning, they did not completely identify themselves either with the Hindus or with the Muslims. Nor were they averse to the adoption of such features of the Hindu and the Muslim faiths which could be brought into harmony with their idealism and needs.

For instance, the Sikh architecture represents a synthesis of the Hindu and Muslim traditions and elements, "In architecture," Prof. Teja Singh holds "the Sikhs adopted the Indo-sarcenic style, which was a mixture of the Hindu and Muslim styles." Nevertheless, the Sikh architecture marks the beginning of new school in India. It presents a certain character of its own, though in appearance it is of the Mughal extraction.

Islam prohibits representation of the living forms, so some of the Muslims regard painting as un-Islamic. The Qur'ān sees signs of the ultimate reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night and in various manifestations of nature, revealed to the sense-perception of man. The duty of a good Muslim is to reflect on these signs and not merely to pass by them, 'as if

he were deaf and blind' for he 'who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come.'

The Sikh art is also based on the fundamental ideal of the Sikh faith. Guru Nanak's view of art as given in the 'Kirtan Sohila,' is that if we only tune our souls to the things of living beauty around us, we realize that the divine spirit outside us, speaks to the divine spirit within us and every thing in nature urges us to move towards truth, through the avenues of beauty. Thus, we can, safely maintain that realism is the key-note of the Mughal and Sikh paintings.

Islamic influence on Sikh paintings is also evident from some of the earlier portraits of the successors of Guru Nanak. For example, in one of the portraits, Guru Amar Das is represented in a Mughal dress and Mughal turban, the dress that was in vogue at that time. This is also evident from the portrait of Guru Ram Das.

Some of the hymns of Guru Nanak clearly show the influence of the Persian as well as Arabic languages. *Khudai, bande, khek, darvesh, dara* are either Persian words or derivatives from Persian words; while *khual, duma, fakir, deen, musafar, haqhalal, arsh* are Arabic words.

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There is no school of sculpture either in Islam or in Sikhism. The walls of a mosque as well as those of a gurdwara are decorated not with images, but with floral designs and religious hymns written in the inscriptional art.

The attitude of Guru Nanak towards prophet Muhammad was one of unbounded love and respect. In a verse which is given in the *Janam Sakhi* of Bhai Bala, Guru Nanak is believed to have remarked, "*ditha nur muhammadi, ditha nabi rasool. Nanak qudrat dekh ke, khudi ghei sab bhool.*" 'I have seen the light of Muhammad (with my mind's eye). I have seen the prophet and the messenger of God, in other words, I have understood his message or imbibed his

spirit. After contemplating the glory of God, my ego was completely eliminated.'

The fifth guru, Arjan Dev, had a tremendous regard for Mian Mir Sahib, a celebrated Muslim mystic, who laid the foundation stone of the Golden Temple. And it is a matter of common knowledge that the Guru *Granth* Sahib, compiled by the fifth guru, is a synthesis of scriptures. It was in the same light, indeed, that Guru Gobind Singh said in his *Vichitra Natak*, that prophet Muhammad was a divine messenger and a great man of religion and faith.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, one of the greatest Muslim divines of the 19th century, in his famous book *Sat Bachan*, has observed that "Guru Nank was a treasure house of divine knowledge and the knower of all mysteries." Dr. Iqbal in one of his immortal verses has expressed the view that Guru Nanak was perfect human being and awakened India from a dormant, dreamy condition to the realization of God.

Some of the Muslims believe that Guru Nanak's *Japji* is a commentary on the *Qur'ān*. Well, if it is a commentary on the *Qur'ān*, it is, in a way, a unique commentary. The word of Guru Nanak was a voice direct from nature's own heart. He explained truths that would make our souls joyous and free.

In brief, Guru Nanak combined the excellence of the preceding saints and sages and had very clear, emphatic and advanced views on social amelioration and spiritual uplift. He was steeped in the Sufi lore and was one of the greatest religious reformers that the world ever produced. Again and again, he remarked "I'm neither a Hindu, nor a Muslim and I do not belong to any of the four castes."

Islam and Sikhism are essentially monotheistic. Both reject idol worship and insist on a life of purity and faith and have a democratic approach to the problems facing humanity. Both Muhammad and Nanak were keen to make their followers immune from empty, barren observances, rites and rituals. They fought against humbug, hypocrisy, bigotry and fanaticism. Both of them advocated a sort

of middle path, between extreme asceticism and excessive greed for worldly delights and they both stressed purity of the heart, combined with the fulfilment of the necessary functions of the body, mind and soul. Both of them believed in practising humility of the right type and in renouncing racial, religious or regional pride. The essence of all religions is good thought and good action, based on the all embracing love of humanity.

# SIKHISM AS AN OFF-SHOOT OF TRADITIONAL HINDUISM AND A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM

**Dharam Pal Ashta**

HINDUISM, in its various manifestations, has cradled many a belief which flourished from age to age and has undergone changes from time to time in accordance with the exigencies of the time. It has shown an incredible capacity not only to assimilate the ideas and beliefs of other races but has also influenced them. By the passage of time, however, it developed serious ills such as religious condemnation, social injustice and political weakness. Bereft of any strength enough to face the internal onslaughts, Hinduism found its vital tenets lying at the feet of orthodox thinking and rigid systems giving rise to false notions of superiority and inferiority amongst its various castes.

‘The renaissance of Hinduism began in the south of India sometime after the 9th century A.D. Two groups of saintly orders, the Alvars and the Adyars, took up its cause and struck at the weakest point of Buddhism and Jainism—the absence of emotional content in their code of ethics. The Alvars championed the cause of Vishnu, the Adyars of Shiva. But both gave their respective deity the status of the One Supreme God. They relaxed the rigours of the caste system and allowed members of the lower orders to join in worship. They spread their message through hymns of love and praise of God. The millions who, because of their inability to understand the high moral tone of the Jain and Buddhist ethics, had been left in cold isolation, left the warm enveloping embrace of a new Hinduism which believed in one God, the equality of mankind, and worship through community hymn singing.<sup>1</sup>

1. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p 20.

Thereafter, Ramanuj, the author of the system named Vishistadvaita<sup>2</sup>, advocated the path of *Bhakti* (unswerving devotion) recommended many centuries before by the *Bhagvad Gītā* and revived by the Alvars and the Adyars as the best way to salvation. Ramanuj travelled extensively throughout northern India as far as Kashmir and left a large number of disciples at every place to propagate his teachings.

‘The main points of the teaching of the *bhaktas* of the south were that God was one, and that though He was indescribable He was the only reality; the rest was *maya*. The best way to serve God was absolute submission to His will. The way to approach Him was through meditation and through the chanting of *mantras* and the singing of hymns. This could best be achieved under the guidance of a spiritual mentor, a guru... ..The house of the *Bhakta* was said to rest on four pillars: *bhakti*, *bhakta*, *bhagvanta* and the *guru*, worship, the worshipper, God and the teacher.’<sup>3</sup>

In the fourteenth century, the Hindus in the north sustained defeatism, humiliation and persecution at the hands of Muslim conquerors. The Hindus were all exposed to danger of being converted to Islam at the point of sword. Hindu temples were looted and razed to the ground. Anarchy reigned supreme. Consequently, the doctrine of complete surrender to God and complete dependence on His mercy alone could make a powerful appeal to them.

Islam, as a faith, did not appeal to the Hindus. Nothing could be assimilated of it. God, as conceived by the Muslims, was a stern and vindictive King whereas love is the key-note and spirit of the *Bhakti Yoga*. A Being who is incapable of loving is also incapable of being loved.<sup>4</sup> A stern ruler leaves no room for love. Fear only begets repulsion. Attraction rests on love. Nowhere in the Koran has *Allah* been addressed as Father.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the use of the

2. Dwivedi, Ram Awadh, *Hindi Literature*, p. 30.

3. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I p. 23.

4. Zwemer, *The Muslim Doctrine of God*, p. 111.

5. Mac Donald, *Vital Forces of Christianity and Islam*, p. 222



word 'Father' for God is held at a discount in Islam.<sup>6</sup> It was Jalal-uddin Rumi who introduced the element of love in Islam but he had to offer an apology for having addressed God as "the Beloved."<sup>7</sup> Love is a central fact in the creed of Sufis.<sup>8</sup> There is no Sufism in Islam.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Islam was not acceptable to the Hindus. Moreover, Islam belonged to a different civilisation. An alien religion, with its scripture written in an alien language, could have found no stand on the threshold of the Hindu culture. Accordingly, the common urge for the attainment of peace and salvation was to have access to a God, Who is full of love and mercy and Who is the object of worship and towards Whom *bhakti* (unswerving devotion) is demanded.

Ramanand who belonged to the sect of Ramanuj, took the lead in this direction in the beginning of the fifteenth century. He revolted against the ritualistic and lifeless *Brahmanic* philosophy and obliterated all distinctions of castes and accepted even Kabir, who was brought up in a Muslim family, as one of his disciples. He democratised religion. He as also other reformers in the north, preferred the use of vernaculars to classical Sanskrit in order to make the *Bhakti* movement popular as also to establish closer contact with the masses. However, this movement too, gave wings to different cults such as Ramaite, Krishnaite, etc. with their respective gods and beliefs, and society remained as weak and scattered as it was before. Unfortunately, not many of the *bhaktas* practised what they preached. Despite their proclamations of the unity of God, they continued to worship one or the other re-incarnation of Vishnu or Shiva, more often represented by stone idols. Their pronouncements on the equality of mankind seldom meant their allowing men of lower castes to become their followers; it was seldom more than an occasional symbolic acceptance of food from their hands. What was wanted was a man who would gather the teachings of the *bhaktas* into one comprehensible system and set an example by putting his

6. Amir Ali, *Spirit of Islam*, p. 122.

7. Claud Field, *Persian Literature*, p. 152.

8. Dwivedi, Ram Avadh, *Hindi Literature*, p. 28.

9. Nicholson, *The Idea of Personality in Sufism*, p. 9.

precepts into practice.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, quick and new horizons opened to the view of the Hindu mind. Kabir, a devotee of Rama, the all permeating attributeless Absolute, preached equality on the religious platform, denounced, with uncommon zeal, images, idolatry and polytheism and struck heavy blows against the false practices of his time. He also condemned the monopoly of the religious *pundits* and stressed the futility of life on earth. Such an approach, however, could only perfect a form of dissent rather than appeal to the masses to lay a strong foundation for a people. So, the celebrated Hinduism still remained a mockery of forms, rituals and lifeless ceremonies.

Defence of the Hindus and the need for reformation in the traditional traits of Hinduism thus gave birth to a cult, later on known as Sikhism. Guru Nanak then appeared on the stage in the Punjab. He undertook the work of the reformation of Hinduism without causing any harm to or retreating from the old order of the Hindu society. 'The popular religion about the time of Nanak's birth was confined to peculiar forms of eating and drinking, peculiar ways of bathing and painting the forehead, and such other mechanical observances—the worship of idols...pilgrimages to the Ganges ... The springs of true religion had been choked by weeds of unmeaning ceremonial, debasing superstitions, the selfishness of the priests and the indifferences of the people.'<sup>11</sup> Guru Nanak himself described the times in many of his writings: 'The age is like a knife. Kings are butchers. Religion had taken wings and flown. In the dark night of falsehood I cannot see where the moon of truth is rising.' (*Majh ki Var*). And again: 'Modesty and religion have disappeared because falsehood reigns supreme. The Muslim Mulla and the Hindu Pandit have resigned their duties, the Devil reads the marriage vows... Praises of murder are sung and people smear themselves with blood instead of saffron.' (*Tilang*). The reigning dynasty at the time were the Lodhis, who according to Nanak had 'squandered away the priceless heritage' that was Hindustan and allowed it to be ravaged by Babar's Mughal hordes. The tumult

10. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, p 25.

11. Narang, Sir Gokal Chand, *Transformation of Sikhism*

of hate and falsehood had made the songs of love of the *Sufis* and the *Bhaktas* almost inaudible.<sup>12</sup>

Like other Hindu saints and mystics of the past, Guru Nanak too believed that there was no peace, joy and bliss till we find rest in God. He consequently gave to the people of the Punjab a fundamental formula for the realisation of the same : rise at the ambrosial hours of the fragrant dawn and meditate upon<sup>13</sup> : *Ek (I) Onkar Satnam Karta Purakhu Nirbhau Nirvair Akal Murti Ajuni Saibham our Prasad*, that is,

‘There is but One God—Manifested and Unmanifested One,  
The Eternal and All Pervading Divine Spirit,  
The Creator, the Supreme Being (Omnipresent, Omniscient,  
Omnipotent),  
Without fear, without enmity,  
Immortal Reality,  
Unborn, Self-existent,  
(A guru’s gift)—  
Realised through the Grace of the Guru—the Divine Master.’

This is the *mool mantra* or *guru mantra* or basic teaching of Sikhism. It is with this sacred mantra the *Guru Granth Sahib* starts.

*Ek Onkar* refers to the one God. The Upanishads have also propounded the oneness of God. According to the *Katha Upanishad* and the *Brihadaranyka Upanishad*, there is no room for diverseness save the one God.<sup>14</sup> According to the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, there is nought save the one God : Brahma is alone. It has no second.<sup>15</sup>

*Satnam* :—It means truth. In the Vedas the glory of truth has been exuberantly sung. *Rit* (factual truth) and *Satya* (absolute truth)

12. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, p. 29

13. Guru Nanak, *7ajji*, Pauri 4

14. *Katha Adhyaya* 2, Valli 4, Shlok 11.

15. *Khand* 2, Shlok 1.

alone manifested themselves before the universe was created. On *satya* alone do the sky, the earth, air and other elements of nature abide.<sup>16</sup> To be sure the word Truth itself conveys this very sense of that which abides, which is indestructible and which transcends time. In the Upanishads, *satya* itself has been given the connotation of *Para Brahma*. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, *satya* has been assigned the first place among the definitions of God: Brahma is truth and knowledge and eternity.<sup>17</sup> In the *Bṛihadaranyka Upanishad* it has been said that the Immortal One is enveloped with truth.<sup>18</sup>

*Karta* :—It means Creator or the Doer. In the Upanishads, God has been described as *Karta* (the Doer) in more than one place. The *Mundaka Upanishad* says: He is the Creator. He possesses power. He is the *Purusha* (the prime soul) and is even Creator of Brahma, the Creator.<sup>19</sup> In this way the whole universe is the handiwork of the Doer (the Creator).

*Purukhu* :—In the Upanishads as well as in the *Bhagvad Gītā*, Purusha has been regarded as One. In the *Mundaka Upanishad*, God has been described as Purusha and Doer: Nothing exists beyond Purusha. Purusha is the limit. He is the final goal.<sup>20</sup> In *Katha Upanishad*, Purusha is taken to be beyond everything.<sup>21</sup> In the *Bhagvad Gītā* also Purusha has been regarded as transcendental: But distinct is the Supreme Purusha called the Highest Self, the indestructible Lord, Who, pervading three worlds, sustains them.<sup>22</sup>

*Nirbhau* :—The Vedas and the Upanishads describe God as fearless. The words *abhay* (fearless) and *nirbhay* (fearless) are synonymous. In the *Rig Veda*<sup>23</sup> God has been described as the

16. *Rig Veda* 10. 8. 1.

*Rig Veda* 10. 85. 1.

17. Valli 2. Anuvak 1, Mantra 1.

18. Adhyaya 1, Brahman 6, Mantra 3.

19. *Mundaka*, Mandal 3, Khand 1, Mantra 3

20. *Mundaka*, Mandal 3, Khand 1, Mantra 3.

21. Adhyaya 1, Valli 3, Mantra 11.

22. Adhyaya 15, Shlok 17.

23. Mandal 2, Sukta 27, Mantra 11.

*Abhyam Jyoti* (fearless light). In the *Subalo Upanishad*, *Abhay* (fearless), *Ashok* (sorrowless) and *Anant* (limitless) have been mentioned as attributes of God. In the *Katha Upanishad*, also *Abhay* has been given as the attribute of God.<sup>24</sup> In the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, the fear of God has been depicted thus : From His fear the wind blows. It is again this fear that makes the sun rise and fire burn, Indra and death run.<sup>25</sup> In *Katha Upanishad* again, the fear of God has been cited almost in the same way : It is through this fear that fire burns. It is this fear that makes the sun shine and Indra and death run.<sup>26</sup> In the *Brihadaranyka Upanishad*, it has been described in greater detail : O Gargi, under the sway of this imperishable One the sun and the moon keep in their orbits. O Gargi, it is again under the sway of this imperishable One that the heaven and the earth keep their positions. O Gargi, under the sway of this imperishable One moments, hours, days and nights, fortnights months, seasons and years abide within their determined limits.<sup>27</sup>

*Nirvair* :—This means devoid of enmity. In the *Bhagvad Gītā* also *Nirvain* has been mentioned as an attribute of God : The same am I in all beings. To me there is none hateful or dear.<sup>28</sup> In this way God who is all pervasive is subtle as well as massive. He resides in all beings from the ant to the elephant. How can He harbour enmity Who is the Creator of the whole universe ? Therefore, from pauper to prince all are equal in His eyes.

*Akal Murti* :—It is natural that God Who is One, Who is symbolised by Onkar, Who is Truth, Doer and Purusha, Fearless and without enemies must also be Timeless. He who is fettered with time can never have the afore-mentioned attributes. Says the Upanishad : That which was, is, shall be is all Onkar. And that, too, which transcends triple time is Onkar.<sup>29</sup>

24. Adhyaya 1, Valli 3, Mantra 2.

25. Valli 2, Anuvak 8, Mantra 1.

26. Adhyaya 2, Mantra 3.

27. Adhyaya 3, Brahman 8, Mantra 9.

28. Adhyaya 9. Shlok 29.

29. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 1.

*Ajuni (Ayoni)* :—Ayoni means unborn, that which does not take birth. There is no gainsaying that he who is born shall surely die, and he who dies is sure to be re-born. This is why the Gurus called God as Ajuni. In *Katha Upanishad*, it is expressed as : He neither takes birth nor dies.<sup>30</sup>

*Saibham* :—*Swayam Bhū* implies self-born. God is self-born and needs no other creator. In the *Guru Granth Sahib*, God has been described as Self-Creator. Hence He is *Swayam Bhū*. The meaning is that God is His own creator and He pervades all things within their limitations or capacities. In the *Ishavasya Upanishad* also God has been described as Self-Born. That Supreme Being is All Seeing, Omniscient, All Pervading and Self-Born.<sup>31</sup>

*Guru Prasad* :—This means guru's gift. God is attainable. It is possible only by the grace of God through a guru, who in turn is attainable by the seeker through Divine Grace.<sup>32</sup> Great stress has been laid on the grace of the Guru in the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagvad Gītā* also. This view finds expression in other holy scriptures too.<sup>33</sup> According to *Katha Upanishad* and *Mundak Upanishad*, the Supreme Self is not attained through discourses nor through intellectuality nor through much learning. It is attained through him alone whom He chooses. To him alone He reveals His form.<sup>34</sup> Vishnavism which flourished in the fourteenth century in northern India believed, however, in complete dependence on the mercy of God.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, various symbolic attributes of the One God which embody the *Mul Mantra* of Sikhism trace their sources to the Vedas, *Upanishads*, the *Bhagvad Gītā* and other holy scriptures of the Hindus.

30. Adhyaya 2, Valli 2, Mantra 18.

31. Mantra 8.

32. Guru Nanak, *Asa-di-Var*, Pauri 4.

33. Narain Singh, *Our Heritage*, p. 41.

34. *Katha Upanishad*, Valli 2, Mantra 23. and *Mundaka* 3, Khand 2, Mantra 3

35. Dwivedi, Ram Avadh, *Hindi Literature*, p. 30

In accordance with Sikhism, God is not simply a Creator but has acquired the sanctity and love that is associated with children and parents and relation between two friends.<sup>36</sup> Various attributes that have been used to describe Him are not only impersonal but also qualitative and those which personify Him. To the Sikhs, God is the Saviour, the Cherisher, the Guru as well as *Akal Purukh*, the Beautiful and also Father, Mother, Kind Friend and Lord of the *das* (humble). God, according to them, is no doubt Almighty, and Supreme, yet within the approach of a common man irrespective of caste and creed and One with Whom man can have communion. They believe that God is the source of all life which ultimately merges in Him :

‘As sparks flying out of a flame  
Fall back on the fire from which they rise ;  
As dust rising from the earth  
Falls back upon the same earth ;  
As waves beating upon the shingle  
Recede and in the ocean mingle  
So from God come all things under the sun  
And to God return when their race is run’,<sup>37</sup>

The above quoted hymn shows definite leaning of Sikhism towards Vishishtadvait conception of God or a modified monoism in which man’s spirit is considered to be part and parcel of God and which when finally re-united to God, retains its own individuality and consciousness. ‘The universe comes from God, lives in Him, and returns to Him’ is an expression commonly used in the Upanishads and *Mahabharat*. In the *Bhagvad Gītā*, creation is represented as evolving from God, as the world at the approach of day slowly emerges from the darkness of night and again dissolves into it after evening twilight.<sup>38</sup>

The Sikh Gurus like other Bhaktas (devotees) believe in the Hindu theory of *Karma* : From the good and bad that man does,

36. Guru Gobind Singh, *Shabad Hazare* (6)

37. Guru Gobind Singh, *Akal Utsav* (87) translated by S. Khushwant Singh.

38. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. V, p. 329.

he reaps the fruit thereof accordingly.<sup>39</sup> They also believe in the emanation of soul from God, and its eventual salvation by way of merging into Him. The transmigration of soul can be brought to an end and salvation attained, if one sincerely loves God. This thought is also ancient and is met with in the Upanishads and the *Bhagvad Gītā*.

According to Sikhism, the ultimate goal of human existence is the attainment of real and eternal happiness which results from the liberation of the soul from trans-migration by way of its re-union with God Who is its origin and destiny. For salvation and enjoyment of inherent bliss, therefore, man must seek union with his Creator, and that is possible through worship alone. Guru Arjan Dev reveals the purpose of life thus :

‘Having gained a human body  
A rare opportunity is thine  
This is thy turn to meet the Lord  
Other activities will bear no fruit  
In the company of the saints  
Learn to adore God  
Set thy mind on crossing  
The sea of life.  
Life is wasted in pursuits  
Of pleasures of the world.’<sup>40</sup>

The life of devotion and introspection, therefore, is not to be one of idle mysticism but of active service done in the midst of worldly relations. There can be no worship without good actions. These actions however, are not to be formal deeds of so-called merit, but should be inspired by an intense desire to please God and to serve fellow-men. At the end of *Chandi Charitra*, the Guru says :

‘Give me this power, O Almighty,  
From righteous deed I may never refrain,  
Fearlessly may I fight all battles of life.

39. *Asa-di-Var*, Pauri 14. and Guru Arjan, *Rag Gauri*.

40. Guru Arjan : *Asa* (Tr.)



Full confidence may I ever have in asserting my battles,  
When the mortal life comes to a close.<sup>41</sup>

It may be reasonable to say that the above prayer derives its inspiration from the *Bhagvad Gītā* wherein Lord Krishna exhorts Arjuna: Therefore at all times remember me only and fight.<sup>42</sup> Commenting upon this, Swami Sivananda says, "Fight": Perform your *swadharma*, the duty of a Kshatriya."<sup>43</sup> Again, this idea is not alien to the one expressed in the following lines:

O King these two alone could go beyond the solar region—  
one who has accepted the *yog* of renunciation and the other who  
has died facing the enemy on the battlefield.<sup>44</sup>

Sikhism is considered to be a religion of the householder. Hinduism too practises asceticism 'merely as a temporary method of discipline and self restraint or as a means to the acquisition of magical powers and the ascetic ideal has never been exalted at the expense of the ideal<sup>1</sup> of the householder. Numerous are the instances of married persons who attained to the greatest holiness and wisdom and were regarded as sages and saints entitled to the highest reverence. Nearly all the great *Rsis* or seers were married men and their wives equally with them were looked upon as exemplars of the highest virtue.<sup>45</sup> Lord Krishna in the *Bhagvad Gītā*<sup>46</sup> says, "Renunciation and Yoga of action both lead to the highest bliss; but of the two, Yoga of action is superior to the renunciation of action.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Renunciation is not a condition for salvation. "Manu, who took a more common-sense view of the duties of man, condemned the pursuit of *Moksha* (salvation) without previously discharging one's

41. Guru Gobind Singh, *Chandi Charitra* I (231), (Tr.)

42. Chapter 8, Shlok 7.

43. Swami Sivananda, *Srimad Bhagvad Gita*: Text, Meaning, Notes and Commentary, p. 296

44. *Niti*

45. Aiyer, P. S. Sivaswamy, *Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals*, p. 67.

46. *Adhvaya* 5, Shlok 2.

47. Swami Sivanand, *Srimad Bhagvad Gita* (1957 ed.) p. 185

duties to the world.<sup>48</sup> In fact "the householder's order of life is considered by Manu to be the most important and responsible of all, for the members of the other three orders of life are supported by the householder and are dependent upon him for their learning and sustenance. The responsibilities of that order require the due control of the senses for their proper discharge."<sup>49</sup> Evidently the performance of duty for the sake of duty is also considered to be *Nivritti* (renunciation) and has the same efficacy.<sup>50</sup>

Sikhism believes in the unity of all creation, the central principle of which is God Himself. As such, all life is 'Absolutely One.' This belief also goes true with Hindu thought.

Sikhism maintains the idea of a saviour appearing from time to time when the world is in trouble and wickedness had the upper hand over virtue. Guru Gobind Singh says: I assumed birth for the purpose of spreading the faith, saving the saints and extirpating the wicked.<sup>51</sup> He, however, believes that the saviours are not descents or incarnations of God (as is given in the *Bhagavad Gītā*); they are the elevated souls blended with *Akal Purukhu*. These elevated souls are called upon to come to the rescue of mankind in distress and save them from humility.

The need of a guru's guidance has throughout been acutely felt in the Bhakti movement. Kabir says: 'Here do I see both the teacher and the Almighty God standing before me. To whom shall I bow in reverence? I am all for the teacher who has shown me Govind (the Almighty God).' This creed of the guru was in vogue in the time of Guru Nanak also. He himself revived it when he installed Guru Angad in his place by ignoring the claims of his sons Sri Chand and Lakshmi Das. The same cult continued till Guru

48. Aiyer, P.S. Sivaswamy—*Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals*, p. 156.

Manu VI, 35

49. Aiyer, P.S. Sivaswamy—*Evolution of Hindu Moral Ideals*, p. 157

Manu, III, 78-79;

*Ramayana Ayodhyakanda*, 106, 22

50. Manu, XII, 89-90, *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* VI, I.

51. *Vichitra Natak* VI, (43)

Gobind Singh established the institution of Guruship and declared that his successor was Guru Granth Sahib. While the instruction of an earthly guru, the one who himself has experienced union with God, has been considered invaluable, the tradition of calling God as a True Guru, or a Great Teacher is also very old. In his verses, Kabir is also sometimes found using the word Guru for God Whom he also calls *Sat Guru*.

The *Gītā* is the nerve centre of the threefold Vedic Paths of *Gyan*, *Bhakti* and *Karma*. Sikhism has illustrated the practical application of the religion embodied in the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* establishes a moral order for promoting virtue and repressing vice. Says Lord Krishna : For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age.<sup>52</sup> Guru Gobind Singh in his *Vichitra Natak* reiterates : For the purpose of spreading the faith, saving the saints and extirpating the wicked, I assumed birth.<sup>53</sup> The difference in the two statements does not alter the basic value of the spirit therein inasmuch as Lord Krishna promised to come to this earth time and again for the purpose whereas the Guru declared that he had come.

Sikhism synchronises with the growth of Islam in India but from within the traditional Hinduism. This cult was infact the saviour of Hinduism. Without recognising the caste system, this order refrained, in practice, from drifting away from Hinduism. Sikhism abhors worship of many gods and goddesses which the Hindus permit. The worship of One God is too as old as the *Rig Veda*. Absolute God is Infinite and the Ultimate Truth. What Sikhism upholds already finds a prominent place in the Vedas : *Hiranya-grabha* exists from the beginning. No sooner did He come into existence than He was the sole Lord of the universe.<sup>54</sup>

Suitability and tastes differ from person to person and from age to age. It is not very surprising that different people in different

52. *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, Adhyaya 4, Shlok 8.

53. *Vichitra Natak*, VI, (43).

54. *Rig Veda*, 10. 121. 1.

ages worshipped different deities more on account of the circumstantial flexibility of Hinduism. The presence of different castes, too, may be due to non-appraisal of the problems connected with life and ways in the vast expanse of time and space.

The fundamental principles of the reformation movement started by Guru Nanak were almost the same which at one time or another were prevalent before he came on the stage as a reformer. His first utterances also aimed primarily at social emancipation and religious uplift. The next three Gurus, too, like the *Bhak'tas* (saints) of old persisted peacefully in upholding what they had inherited, but the circumstances, in due course of time, made the Fifth Guru Arjan Dev realise that it was impossible to preserve his followers without the aid of arms as experiences led him to feel that harder days were ahead. He, therefore, advised his son and successor, Har Gobind, to sit fully armed on his throne and maintain a large army. The execution of Guru Arjan Dev and the imprisonment of Guru Hargobind flared up the instincts of rivalry and open hostilities between the Moghuls and the Sikhs. The peaceful movement, started by Guru Nanak, culminated in the course of time in a political order under the stress of the circumstances fit enough to evolve a disciplined military theocracy to accept the menacing challenge of Islam, fight its ambitious, provocative, unconventional colours and persecution. In his effort to bring down the growing power of this Order, Aurangzeb sent for Guru Tegh Bahadur and offered him the usual alternative of embracing Islam or courting death. The Guru sacrificed his life. He did not bring any shame to his faith. The brutal slaughter of the innocent Guru stirred the feelings of the people against the Muslims. Acts of wanton brutality reminded the people of the past loot, arson and destruction of the Hindu temples and the hatred which the Muslims bore for them. All these events prove that the forcible conversion of the natives to Islam as well as the atrocities inflicted by the Moghuls was a challenge to the peaceful order of Guru Nanak. Eventually this order not only generated a force enough to combat Islam but also aimed at converting Islam to its fold.

Guru Gobind Singh bestowed a new conception of God on his followers on the analogy of the one indicated in Chapter XVI and

in many other places of the *Yajur Veda*, that is, He is also *Kharag* (sword) to punish the evil, *Dhanurpan* (the holder of a bow) and the Lord of war. Thus, the *Khalsa*, as distinct from *Sahajdhari* Sikhs who are not very much different from the Hindus<sup>55</sup> both physically and otherwise sprang from the spirit of the Guru, fully awakened to a new and inspired life. In order to keep discipline in the *Khalsa* he enjoined upon his followers to always wear the uniform prescribed by him, that is, to wear the five Ks: (1) *Kesas* (unshorn hair and beard), (2) *Kara* (steel bracelet), (3) *Kachha* (breeches reaching upto knees), (4) *Kanga* (comb) and (5) *Kirpan* (dagger or sword). These are the symbols to distinguish from others the *Khalsa*, a militant order of Guru Gobind Singh.

Partial modifications of the beliefs and practices as also physical distinctions do not make Sikhs a race of different origin. Practices after all touch only the outer fringe but the internal kernel remains the same. The changes wrought externally have rather provided a galaxy of colours to the rainbow of Hinduism. Moreover, if God is to be understood only through a particular language and is to be identified with the symbols of a particular sect alone, He would be limited within, and thus lose His universality. World-wide fraternity which Sikhism too champions cannot be had by providing a rigid disposition to it. I am afraid if any departure from Guru Gobind Singh's mould towards tolerance is resorted to and if the Sikhs secede from what is not as such, the day is not far off when Sikhism too will find itself gripped with the same octopus which had squeezed Hinduism.

Guru Gobind Singh might well claim to be the leader of the people, for, he challenged the growing power of the Moghuls: 'I shall enable the sparrow to drive out the falcon, and then alone there will be justification of my taking up the name Gobind Singh.'<sup>56</sup> In pursuance of this aim, the Guru brought the desired change in the mental out-look of Hinduism and cured it of many evils to

55. Mansukhani, Dr. Gobind Singh, (vide Foreword to *A Critique of Sikhism* by Gurmit Singh)

56. *Rehatnāmā* (Tr.)

which it had fallen a prey. He made some of his followers soldier-saints (*Khalsa*) and thus deviated from the established peaceful order. This order of soldier-saints may well be called an off-shoot of Hinduism.

The contribution of Guru Gobind Singh had noble features of simplicity, democracy, solidarity, propagativeness and policy. Cutting through the mesh of countless petty ways which the code of the Smritis had imposed on Hindus, he made them active and stable. He gave a few and simple rites. Nothing could be simpler than this. He made Sikhism purely democratic so as to mobilise all within the fold effectively and efficiently and made the best of the untouchables. He levelled many castes to make one - the Sikhs. The system of Gurumata lays down line of action for the guidance of the *Sangat* (organisation). It is the highest court of appeal. As a sequel to his idea of welding together various fragments of Hinduism, the Guru lashed against idolatry, and other evils of Hindu society so as to foster the spirit of fraternity and integration amongst Hindus.

The greatest requirement of India to-day is national integration. It requires a real understanding. There is a school of thought which maintains that the Sikhs are not Hindus. It tries to emphasise the points of difference rather than points of similarity between the two.<sup>57</sup> Such attitude is ill-informed and unfair and is inspired by political and religious prejudices and proceeds from a lack of historical perspective and is against the spirit of what the Guru says in his autobiography. It is thus conclusively proved that the Sikh cult is based on the Vedas, Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and other holy books of the Hindus. As a matter of fact the relation of the Sikh cult to the Hinduism is very intimate. Only the ignorant will fumble for more concrete proof in this behalf. It would be convenient to say that to be a Sikh or to remain a Hindu is no more than a personal choice. In the same family one brother may be a Hindu and another a Sikh. For a Hindu to change to

57. Mansukhani, Dr. Gobind Singh, Foreword to *A Critique of Sikhism*  
by Gurmit Singh.

Sikhism is not a conversion, nor is it a lesser evil, as some are inclined to think. Conversion implies embracing an alien faith. Nothing could be more ridiculous than to suppose that Sikhism is alien to Hinduism. Most certainly it is not, as it has sprung from Hinduism itself.<sup>58</sup>

In view of the above, it is difficult to imagine Sikhism as a separate entity away from Hinduism howsoever distinct it may appear. The idea of Hindu unity, the very purpose for which Sikhism took its birth, comes to an end, if it were so. Islam, for instance, never thought of alienating itself from within despite its being scattered all over the world. How, then, can the dignity and valour of a proud people like the Sikhs, originally an integral part of Hinduism, disown loyalty to its mother. After all, to sum up, Sikhism came into existence to save and defend Hinduism. Any effort to remodel or to improve upon things (which is a must because in it alone the civilisation can flourish) must rest within Hinduism and not outside it.

58. Kuttakuti, Dr. (Vide *Khalsa Review* of 26th October, 1936)

# ARABIC-PERSIAN KEY-WORDS IN SIKHISM : THEIR ORIGIN AND MEANING

Mohan Singh

Bideh sāqīyā sāghir-i sabz gūn  
Ki mārā b'kār ast jang andarūn ;  
Labālab kun va dam b'dam nūsh kun  
Gham-i har du 'ālam farāmūsh kun.

—Guru Gobind Singh

## I

In the ninth century A.D., on the eve of the Muslim conquest, traditional Indian society was already confronted with the internal challenges of its history in the shape, first, of the aftermath of Buddhist *ahimsā*, *śūnyatā* and monasticism, and, second, of the rise of the new orders of *Sannyāsā* and *Bhakti* and *Hatha Yoga*. The ingress of foreign tribes, during the preceding four or five centuries, had additionally complicated the problem of a suitable response. By 1526 A.D., when Nanak was 57, the new challenge of Islam and of Mughal-Muslim rule had acquired its specific historic shape. We must always carefully distinguish and separate the two aspects of this challenge, even if, in a certain historical era, we observe intermingled, with terrible effect on the populace at large, the best in Islamic ideology and the worst in Mughal Muslim ambitionism and adventurism. I hope to show in this paper, by considering the vocabulary and usage of some Arabic-Persian terms in the Sikh scriptures, that the Founder Guru and the Tenth Guru consciously made this distinction and never lost sight of it.

The Founder-Guru was the first known Indian poet who called India *Hindustan*, who mentioned all the three conquering Muslim dynasties, Turk, Pathan and Mughal, and who made it clear that their conquests had confronted the goat-hearted Indians not with



civilized invaders but with blue-robed barbarians. He termed the rulers of the age butchers with long knives, agents of darkness engulfing the lights of law and order. As assessed by Guru Nanak Dev, the five-fold challenge of the Muslim was that the subjugated people must : (1) give up Sanskrit learning ; (2) accept conversion, or, at any rate, build no new temples and resign themselves to the desecration and destruction of extant temples and idols ; (3) disarm ; (4) tolerate rapine and one way inter-marriage ; and (5) yield up their savings and a proportion of income in one form or another.

The Founder-Guru's initial response was to charge God with having brought to pass this unequal struggle of the carnivorous tiger and the docile goat ; permitting mass rape, terrorization, massacre and enslavement ; advancing and aggrandizing Khorasan at the expense of Hindustan ; and never giving a sign of His compassion and pain at such suffering. Nanak further foretold that soon a valiant disciple and protagonist of a fighter Guru would arise to even the scales and exact retribution. He assured those in chain that the doom of the enchainers would be accomplished, and at the very hands of the enchained ones.

Nanak himself learnt Persian, incorporated certain Persian key words in his poetry, and composed verses in Persian. He studied the main tenets of Islam in their Quranic purity, and was thus able to expose the formal ritualism of both Hinduism and Islam. His journey to Macca, Medina and Baghdad is fully authenticated and it is established that he travelled like a Muslim pilgrim, accompanied by a Muslim singer.

Guru Nanak took over from the Quran and persian Islam several names of God, attributes such as *karīm*, *rahīm*, *bakshīnd*, *mihrvān*, *parvardigār* and gave them a prominence which they had never before had in the poetry of an Indian saint. He redefined a true Muslim as one who furbishes (sayqal) his spirit. (The Fifth Guru defined a Muslim as one whose heart is like soft wax, *mum-dīl*.) Through this and other precedents Nanak was laying the foundations of the Sikh faith, upon which his successors could build further. It was Tenth Guru's work to complete the total structure, and give it its perfected form.

## II

In the concluding part of his Epic of Sri Krishna, completed in 1688 A.D. at the age of twenty-two, Guru Gobind Singh had already addressed *Śiva*, praying to be blessed with *Dharma Yuddha*, and, in earlier portions of the same work, depicted Yudhishtira slaying his enemies, the white, brown and black *mlechhas*. In his Cosmic Mystery Drama (*Bachitra Nāṭak*) written perhaps in his thirty-second year, Guru Gobind Singh made four cardinal pronouncements :

(1) That Guru Nanak Dev *Bedī* was descended directly from Sri Rama's first son Kuśa, and Guru Ram Das *Sodhī* from Sri Rama's second son Lava ;

(2) That in taking over the guruship from Amar Das, and making the apostolical succession hereditary, Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Guru, was only affirming the rights of the Kuśites ;

(3) That the Tenth Guru had himself been specifically commissioned to put down *adharma* and institute *dharma* ; glorify the one God ; denounce all ritualism, superstition and compromise : and stress victory over ones's mind ;

(4) That he had been blessed by the Lord<sup>•</sup> with His sonship as the sign of the devolution of divine authority.

As far as the Hindu audience was concerned the declaration of the Guru's descent from Sri Rama's son, and his succession to Guru Nanak's *gaddi*, were sufficient to vouchsafe the legitimacy of his life's work. To the Muslim audience of the Cosmic Mystery Drama, here was the one true God speaking exactly as He had in the Bible and in the Quran, confirming the *Rasālat* or messengership of Muhammad and blessing the Guru with His sonship,<sup>1</sup> the term employed

1. DG., p. 56. "Then God caused *Mahūdīn* (Muhammad) to be born ; He made him the King of Arabia (Arab des). Muhammod too founded a new way

being the Persian *nawāzā*, derivative of *Nawāzīdan*. There was here not only a claim to Prophethood or Messengership, but the Tenth *Pātshāh* had produced a Holy Book also. (With Guru Gobind Singh the term *pātshāh* (king) replaced the term guru ; his scribe refers to him as *Pātshāhī X* and not as *Mahallā X*.) The third attribute required to substantiate a claim to Divine Messengership was the power to work miracles. And the one miracle which Guru Gobind Singh proposed to perform was to make each follower able to face and oppose one million foes. He would confer on all his initiates the blessing of immortality (in the field).

Guru Gobind Singh gave currency in his work (Punjabi and Persian) to certain ideational words, a consideration of which can provide us with important clues to his ideas. Terms which the Muslim rulers were employing every day as the marks of their superior privileges and power were appropriated by him and given a new significance, which had the effect often of transferring them from the realm of the profane to that of the sacred.

Important Arabic-Persian words and epithets of the *Dasam Granth* fall into four categories :

- (1) terms relating to kingship and State administration ;
- (2) terms of warfare ;
- (3) appellations characterizing the Godhead, and which represent the fundamental, universal aspect of Islam ;
- (4) terms which formed part of the *Shariat* lexicon, but which could give reference to moral and ethical imperatives.

I shall attempt to elucidate the four categories separately.

(*Panth*) and compelled all the kings subdued to perform circumcision." P. 57. The NOT-TIME Person said :

I exalt thee as My Son. I have made thee to preach the Way. Wheresoever thou art, propagate *Dharma*, and prevent people from irrational and perverse-minded activity.

## III

The terms of the first category served to announce the existence of a State within a State, a spiritual republic and militant commonwealth within the imperial, theocratic Mughal domain, parallel to it yet profoundly different from it. The appellations *sachchā pātshāh* (or *bādshāh* or *shahanshāh*), *huzūr*, *sāhib*, *dīvān*, *dargāh*, *mahal*, *salāmat*, *nishān*, were employed of God, the Guru-King or the Holy Granth Sahib interchangeably. The honorific *sāhib* was affixed to everything, including objects and places, connected with the Guru and the Holy Book. *Darbār*, *nishān*, *chobdār*, *naqqāra*, *dīdār*, *huzūrī(ā)*, *takht*, *hukumnāma*, *mahzar*, *nazr*, all appertaining to kingship, were also taken over. Whereas the profane Emperor was the *Pātshāh* (*Bādshāh*), the Guru was the *Sachchā Pātshāh*, the True King, and, when used of him, the old terms acquired a new meaning.

## IV

The usages of the second category, connected with warfare and military organisation,<sup>2</sup> also reveal the same processes of parallelism, opposition, and differentiation. For example, whereas the Emperor's recruit was merely the mercenary *siyāhī*, the follower of the Guru was a volunteer who called himself *nihang*, Persian for an *alligator*, the lion among water-dwellers. The Persian word for the mercenaries' pay (*tankhwāh*) was contemptuously transferred to denote the expiatory fine imposed when a member transgressed the rules of the new commonwealth. At the foundation of the *Khālsah* the Guru is reported (in a manuscript discovered by me) to have stated that every foot soldier of his would hence now term himself *Subādār* and every Horseman a Prince; every Sikh village would be a Delhi and every Sikh home a mint (*taksāl*). When the Tenth Guru summoned all

2. DG., pp. 45-50 : Sifat, Kāgaz, Rahim, Hazār Hūr, Gharib Nawāz, Khadang, Jang, Tir, Jawān, Tund Tāzi, Ghāzi, Tez, Nishān, Halabī, Junabī, Hāl, Kamān, Sāhib, parvāh. Pp. 60-73 : Shikār, Shahāb, Fauj, Sipāhī, Khūni, Khurāsān, Khān, Sipāh, Ghubāi, Damāma, Shor, Sulh, Qaid, Tabal, Nihang, Palang, Bahisht, Qahhār, Malang, Gurz, Jang, Zālim, Sawār, Sardār, Ahadi, Babur, Din, Duni, Dam, Sazā, Dushwār.

the Sikhs, *Gurmukhs*, *Nāmdhārīs*, *Sahajdhārīs*, and *Nānak Panthīs* to come, armed and riding on horseback, to partake of the immortalizing *amrit*, he chose the new honorific of *Singh*, Lion, for his initiates. He chose *Singh* partly because it was parallel to *Shīh* (Persian-*Sher*), the term by which Nanak had called the invading hosts of Babar. Now Hindustan too was to have its own men-lions.

Perhaps the most important Persian usages of the Tenth Guru were the five terms, *Khālisah*, *sardār*, *fateh*, *tegh* and *dēg*, which together characterize and express succinctly the total outlook and psychology of the new ideal group. All of them, with the exception of the honorific *sardār*, occur in the Sikh daily prayer.

The term *khālisah*<sup>3</sup> means "pure" without any mixture or admixture. It was employed in Mughal times to designate land, which was the personal property of the Emperor. It was by way of contrast with the notable absence of a personal bond between the profane Emperor and his subject that the True King designated the whole community of his followers, and also each individual member, as the *Khālisah*, i.e., the personal property (of the True King, Guru, God). Whosoever belonged personally to God-Guru-True King could not suffer defeat or failure; he or she must necessarily win martyrdom. Either of these outcomes was a success of the *Khālisah* and hence, since the two were identified, of *Vāhigurū*. The word *fateh* (success, victory) danced on the lips of every *Singh* scores of times a day, for this slogan-cum-greeting was exchanged loudly whenever and wherever two *Singhs*-male or female, young or old, in health or sickness-met.

The honorific *Sardār*, like the appellation *Singh*, was earned through initiation. Like *Sāhib*, it was employed by Guru Gobind Singh in describing God (e. g., in one of his *swayyās*: *Aur jahān*

3. According to *Farhang-i-Anand Raj*, *Khalisah* is special, not mixed or adulterated; as a technical term, is land or territory of the King, which is not the *jāgir* of any one else. The root *Khālis* means simple, unmixed, the white of every thing. *Mukhlis* and *Khalisatan* are found used in the Holy Quran.

*nidān kachhū nahi Ē subhān tuhī sardārā*). In Persian a *sardār* is a ruler, headman or chief (of a tribe), and it was the current honorific for ruling Mughals, Turks, Pathans, Shaykhs or Sayyids.

Guru Gobind Singh used the term *shamshīr* when he wrote in the *Zafarnāma* (Epistle of Victory) that resort to the sword was indicated when all peaceable means were barred or spent; but used in the same letter, *tēgh* and *degh* when talking of Aurangzeb. This was perhaps because Nanak had already used *tēgh* (when saying that it is God Himself who makes some to wield the sword) and *dēgh*, saying that God had given the *dēgh* once and for all. The Tenth Guru's father was known as Tegh Bahadur.

*Dēg*, the symbol of the Sikh commensal free kitchen, and *tēgh* are referred together in the *Chaupāī*, *Tiriyā Carīya* and *Zafarnāma*. They also appear together later, associated with *fateh*, on Banda's<sup>4</sup> coinage in the inscription :

Dēg-o tēgh-o fateh-o nusrat bēdarang  
Yāft az Nānak Gurū Gobind Singh.

In Punjabi speech *tēgh* rhymes with *dēg*.

In his *Śāstra Nāma Mālā* Guru Gobind Singh describes the seven types of weapons of war and gives some thousands of synonyms for them; he specifies that all of them are appellations of God also. In these verses he includes several Arabic-Persian terms, e.g., *sayf*, *tīr*, *tēgh*, *tabar*, *kard*, *gōlah*, *tōp*, *gurz*, *tufang*, *khanjar*, *qalam*, *khadang*, *tātārcha*. He refers, among others, to *tupak*, *tabar*, *tīr*, *sayf*, as his *Pīrs* and says, in the succeeding couplet, O Lord, Thou art *Tīr*, *Tabar*, *et cetera*; Whosoever recites Thy Name is aided to cross over.

4. *Bandah* is Persian for a servant, a slave. Guru Nanak had said: He is verily a true servant who of his own will enslaves or conscripts himself so that he may envision the Lord, God.

## V

All the Gurus (except the boy-Guru, (eighth) Hari Krishna) had made themselves learned in the knowledge of Hinduism and Islam, their orthodox tenets as well as their various sects and branches, so as to grasp and assimilate their fundamentals by going behind the multifarious forms, rites and symbols. In borrowing the Arabic-Persian ideational terms of the third category, the conceptions of God, Guru Gobind Singh was following in his predecessors' footsteps, and perfecting their tradition. His usages of this category show a profound and loving knowledge of the essential Islam. The Prophet of Anandpur, like the Prophet of Mecca, never depended on the sword *qua* sword but but as an agency of the Lord, whose command it obeys :

Thou first strikest the foe, the sword only follows.

—*Śastra Nāma Mālā*

The following appellations of God, found in the Tenth Guru's scripture, constitute challenging reminders to those today who would undervalue Islamic or Sikh spiritual values :

- (1) The Unfathomable (*'amīq*),
- (2) The companion and Friend (*ṣafīq*),
- (3) The Moon of Moons (*māh-i mākān*),
- (4) The Remitter of Sins (*afū al-gunah*),
- (5) The all-Aware (*kalīm*),
- (6) The Lover of the Poor (*gharīb al-parast*),
- (7) The Master of the Word (*sāhib-i kalām*),
- (8) The Beautiful Lamp (*husn al-chirāgh*),
- (9) The all-Tongues (*ṣabān*),
- (10) The Conjunction of Opposites (*sāhib-i qirān*),
- (11) The Eternal Occupant of Paradise (*bahisht al-niwās*),
- (12) The all-Time, all-Space (*zamīn al-zamān*),
- (13) The all-Thought (*khīyāl*),
- (14) The Mystery (*'ajāib*),
- (15) The Vanquisher of Foes (*ghanīm al-shikan*).

- (16) The Dispeller of Foes (*ghanīm al-kharāj*).
- (17) The Beauteous Countenance (*husan al-wajūh*).
- (18) The Time of Time, the Death of Death (*zamān al-zamān*).
- (19) The Dear One (*al-'azīz*).
- (20) The Lord of the Lands (*sāhib-i dīyār*).
- (21) The Perfectly Just (*dādgar*).
- (22) The Dispenser of the Arts (*har humar*).
- (23) The Eternal Spring (*naubahār*).
- (24) The Perfect Orderer of the Universe (*jahān rā tūi bastah ī band-o bast*).

## VI

In the fourth and final category of his Arabic-Persian vocabulary we find Guru Gobind Singh following the example of Guru Nanak Dev, who first sought to replace formal systems, and their spent and dried out regulations and rites, with the corresponding living moral imperatives. In his *Zafarnāma* Guru Gobind Singh has alluded to *shari'at* as well as *haqīqat*, but has highlighted those attributes of the Lord which, through their emulation in the conduct of living men, could provide the sure foundation of a living faith. The same line of thought is evident in the Punjabi portion of the *Dasam Granth*.

The Guru's reference to *anbiyā*, *anbiyā*, *ghaus*, to countless *rasūls*, to the Prophet Muhammad, (*mahā dīn*), to the *Rafizis* and *Imam Shafis*, and to the Pahlavis, Turks, Arabs, citizens of Makran, etc., are all interesting. He was very knowledgeable about matters Islamic and knew of the affairs of the Muslim world outside India. He makes mention of medieval Muslim saints, Mu'in al-din and Shah Madar, and the classical Persian poet Firdausi. He poetized at some length, in parts of *Dasam Granth*, much Muslim lore connected with historical and folk figures. He concentrated most often, however, on depicting the corruption and degeneracy, public as well as domestic, of the Emperor, the court and *haram*, and of the Mullahs, Qazis and Shaykhs, etc.



## VII

I wish to emphasize particularly, since there are some who regard Guru Gobind Singh as an innovator and a breakaway, that many key-words which the Tenth Guru employed, whether derived from Arabic-Persian or from Sanskrit, and every corresponding concept, were in fact first used by the Founder-Guru. The following examples of Arabic-Persian vocabulary are drawn (i) from a Persian poem by Nanak, and (ii) from some hymns of his. The words are listed in the order in which they occur in the texts :

(i) *haq, kabīr, karīm, bē ‘arīb parvardīgān, fānī, ‘azra‘īl, dastgīr, takbīr, khayāl.*

(ii) *dar, darbār, hukm, sāhib, pātshāh, sifat, nishān, hāzīr, huzūr, karam, pīr, shaykh, dargāh, qudrat, salāmat, qāzī, nullā, qurān, sultān, dīwān, jamā‘at, nihāl, khudā, haq, halāl, sunnat, rōzā, musalmān, ka‘aba, kalimah, namāz, tasbīh, bahisht, haram, auliya al-dīn, muslim, rab, marahmat, ra‘yyat, sikkadār, kufī gū, kufīānah, saikār, saidār, sawār, takht, ‘ajjab, salām, khazāna, lashkar, mahal, qassāb, khāliq, dushman, shaitān, tēgh, ‘adlī, qurbān, hukmat, ‘ishq, topak, dēgh.*

Now, consider for instance Nanak’s usage of *haq* (which he employs for God, Truth and Right) in the sense of right, where he says that to trespass on the *haq* of another human being is forbidden like beef to the Hindu, and like pork to the Muslim. The contexts in which the other similar terms occur make it plain repeatedly that Nanak had two intentions in mind, firstly, to awaken and uplift the subjugated people, and, secondly, to meet and rebuke the oppressors ideologically on their own ground. As I have tried to show, the Tenth Guru also sought to achieve the same purpose with similar weapons.

The Tenth Guru held securely, following his predecessors, to the underlying idea that the transcendent and omniscient God ruled the universe according to His will and pattern, while yet expecting and requiring His creatures to adore and glorify Him, bearing witness to His attributes. All the Sikh Gurus thought and preached,

moreover, that man's salvation lay in the emulation, in this world of the Divine attributes which the Gurus expounded and bore witness to. The greatest creative poetry of Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Arjun Dev and Guru Gobind Singh (Jap, Vār Āsā, Sukhmanī, Jāp, Akāl Ustat, Vār Bhagautī), consists in the celebration of the infinite attributes and appellations of God and His god-men (*sant, brahma-jñānin, harijan, sādḥ, gurū*). Through the emulation of the qualities which were therein celebrated, the fallen and sunken of this world, Muslims and Hindus, who were as beasts and ghosts, were to be saved and regenerated, to become men, indeed god-men (*dēvatās*).

The Divine qualities most often celebrated by Guru Gobind Singh, and illustrated by him from history as well as autobiography, were expressed in his Arabic-Persian vocabulary :

*Haq, insāf, amān, rahmat, bakhshish, 'afy, kalām, sha'ūr, dimāgh, husn, gharīb parastī, gharīb nauāzī, fahīmī, kalīmī, razzāqī, harīf shikanī, sāhib qirānī, tamīz, karīmī, haqīqat shināsī.*

Perhaps the most surprising of the Tenth Guru's usages is, however, the one which I have advisedly reserved so far. It should not surprise that Guru Gobind Singh who perfected a new faith lauded his Master with the epithet<sup>5</sup> *amazhabē*, as the Religionless One. He says :<sup>6</sup> 'Thou art, O God, beyond all religion ; Thou hast no religion except it be Godliness ; Thou hast created one after another all the religious systems and destroyed them. Thou createst religious conflicts, Thou aidest-savest any Thou choolest. Guru Gobind Singh did not found a new religion or faith or creed. He continued to advance the Dharma, Marga, Panth, Rāh of Guru Nanak Dev ; he only repeated verbatim the orders he had received from the Timeless Person regarding his own status and the pattern of Divine Process, and his own mission on earth. But he did perfect a new organization initiated by his great grandfather, giving it a new name, a new form, a universal purpose, an eternal validity.

5. Arabic, *Mazhab*—religion, path ; A (Sanskrit prefix)—*Mazhab-e-* = O Thou who art without a religion or path of Thy own.

6. DG, p. 718

## VIII

Our investigation of the Arabic-Persian vocabulary of the Tenth Guru points to certain general conclusions concerning the nature of Sikhism and, in particular, the scope of its response to the challenge of Islam, of the Muslim rulers and the Muslim divines. This response was, in certain regards, assimilative as well as reactionary; in other more decisive regards, it was creatively original, while also re-presenting certain old Indian ideals in a new guise and with shifted stress.

(1) The attributes which Guru Gobind Singh ascribes to God follow and resemble those of the God of the Quran, but with a difference: He is the Remitter of Sins (without any mediation), Guide, Companion, Friend, Lord of (all) the Lands, and Creator and Destroyer of all Paths and Religions, Himself beyond Religion. Sikhism, like Islam, stresses the unity of God; it postulates God as absolute, the Master; and prescribes unreserved surrender to His command (*hukm*) and will (*razā*) to obtain individual stillness of mind (*qarār-i dil*) and peace (*aman*) among nations. Again, like Islam, Sikhism is spiritually unitary frowning upon sects and schisms.

(2) Sikhism fully assimilated and made its own the Islamic rejection of, and aversion to, every form of traditional Indian image worship, enjoining in its place the celebrative and congregational recitation of The Name. Guru Gobind Singh avowed himself *butshikan*.

(3) The Muslim kings and divines (Qazis, Pirs, Shaykhs) together constituted a theocratic State, deriving its authority from divine mandate. As a movement of reaction Sikhism, particularly under the Sixth and Tenth Gurus, responded by identifying God, King, Guru and the Holy Word into unity. The Tenth Guru affirmed his own status as the son and delegate of God, and then transmitted the sonship to the *Singhs*, individually and collectively, through his initiation. He placed on one and the same pedestal the Guru and the disciple (*chēlā*), the leader and the led, male and female, husband and wife. When he bequeathed his mantle to the community of the

*Khālisah* he completed Sikhism's exorcism of the slave mentality and of the traditional surrender-and-survive policy which underlay it.

(4) As against the Muslim emperors' interdiction on the bearing of arms by non-Muslims (save the Rajputs), the Tenth Guru enjoined all his *Singh Sahibs* to bear the *Kripan* and practise the arts of defence and offence, which he celebrated in his writings. Certain other Sikh customs including honorifics and greetings, also originated in the assertion of the rights of free men and in opposition to the State Power.

(5) Although Sikhism, like Islam, is an evangelizing faith, it does not know the Islamic exclusiveness. Its vocabulary possesses no term corresponding to *kāfir*, infidel; a Sikh is just not-Sikh. The *Guru Granth Sahib* itself includes the writings of some Muslim saints.

# SIKHISM THE CONFLUENCE OF HINDUISM AND ISLAM

**Mrigendra Singh**

*“O Sufferer ! What will thou do with  
the Veda or Kitaba ;  
Deciphering not the One and Only.”*

“Guru Nanak”<sup>1</sup>

IN the philosophical heritage of India an organic confluence of two eternal philosophical streams of Hinduism and Islam was brought about in the Punjab by Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century. The philosophical ideal of unity in diversity and diversity subsumed in the one God, being without an equal,<sup>2</sup> is the aim of the philosophy of Guru Nanak which was continued by Guru Gobind Singh. This pantheism is envisioned in monotheism and monotheism in monism. The gurus themselves are of the view that all vedic knowledge and other scriptures have the same aim and object.<sup>3</sup>

It may be argued that plurality is evident to all, therefore to make an effort to prove it is futile. But as monism or even unity in diversity is not evident to all without a master (Guru),<sup>4</sup> hence

1, *Guru Granth*, Guru Nanak ; Bhairo Astpadi : 1. 6. 1153.

2. Ibid., Guru Nanak, *Asa di Vār* : 24. 1. p. 475.

3. Ibid., *Japu* : 22. p. 5 and Guru Arjun, *Suli*. 50. 3. 3. p. 747.

Ibid., *Japu* 1. p. 1. *Alharva Veda*, 13. 4. 12.

*Qur'ān*, *Al Hadid*. 1. 3. or Ch-57-3.

*Gītā*, 13. 20, 21, 22.

*Dasam Granth*, Akal Ustat, 85, 86.

Bhai Gur Das : Var : 31, and Chanda : 1., 2., & 3.

4. Ibid., Guru Arjan : 7 : 5 : 4. p. 864.

Gonda : 17 : 15. p. 867, also

Guru Ram Das, *Tukhari*, 10 : 4 : 3. p. 1116 and

*Dasam Granth*, Ram Avatar : 863 etc.

it becomes the only thing worth pondering over. It is for this reason that from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, all the gurus praised monism<sup>5</sup> and negated dualism.<sup>6</sup> All the gurus themselves lived true to their philosophical teachings, thus setting an outstanding example to be followed by all humanity. Their message of philosophy is technically known as *raja yoga (sikhi)*<sup>7</sup>, meaning that type of knowledge the aim of which is to yoke oneself to the underlying unity both in the temporal and the spiritual domains.

### THE OBJECT OF PHILOSOPHY

Eternal reality and universal truths are to be found in all religions and philosophies, just as the material cause gold is never seen non-subsistent in gold ornaments (gold only keeps changing its forms and names), so is the case with *dharma*, being the substantial cause of all philosophies and religions. Just as one adapts oneself to food, clothing, etc. due to change of season, similarly *dharma* in each age is rejuvenated and reinterpreted to meet the needs of the changing environment, temperament and capacity of man living in it. It is for this reason that Guru Amar Das says :

“Each age has its own dharma ;  
Verify this from the Vedas and Puranas.”<sup>8</sup>

### DEGENERATION OF HINDUISM AND ISLAM

The period from the time of Guru Nanak to that of Guru Gobind Singh was an age of degeneration as recorded by Bhai Gurdas and by various historians.<sup>9</sup> There was gross misinterpretation of both vedic and kitabic scriptures and their philosophies, bringing about a decline in their religions because of not having proper understanding of

5. Ibid., Guru Amar Das, Siri Rag, Var : 6 : 1. p. 84.

6. Ibid., Guru Nanak, Malhar Var, 28 : 1 : 2 : p. 1291.

7. *Guru Granth*, Savaie Guru Nanak, 2 to 6. p. 1389-1390 and also Savaie Guru Ram Das : 11. 12. p. 1398 and Savaie Guru Arjan Dev : 3. p. 1407, etc.

8. *Guru Granth*, Guru Amar Das : Bilawal : 4. p. 797. also *Bhagvat Purana* 12.3.52.

9. Bhai Gurdas : Var 1. 17. 21.

the spiritual aim and object.<sup>10</sup> It is for this reason that Bhagat Nam Dev says :<sup>11</sup>

“The Hindu is blind in both eyes,  
The Turak is blind in one eye :  
Out of both, the realiser is wise.”

The political expediency, nepotism, favouritism and corruption had led to social degeneration and affected the ideology and minds of the priest (Pandits and Kazis etc.) who were the judges, lawyers then ; thus this degeneration percolated into the lives of the people in general.<sup>12</sup> Even those who were true to their philosophical teachings, such as Bhagat Jai Deva, Ramananda, Nam Deva, Trilochana, Sheikh Farid, and Kabir,<sup>13</sup> and every strongly disposed against the tide of this degeneration, were unable to dam this flood of iniquity which was then the order of the day.

In this way about a dozen and a half saints that are mentioned in the *Guru Granth* who preceded Guru Nanak and his nine successors were all non-organized, and thus they had failed to set up even a semblance of an organization to spread their ideals. It was the far-sightedness of the gurus who initiated the compiling and preserved their works in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

#### THE NEW SYNTHESIS

Guru Nanak was the founder organizer of this practical way of life, a message for universal benevolence. Thus the gurus began making synonymous their own teachings with the teachings of the saints of the medieval period of the different Hindu and Islamic philosophical schools. They accepted only those saints who realised the ultimate.

10. Ibid., Var : 1, 20.

11. *Guru Granth*, Nama Dev Gonda : 7. 3. 4. p-875.

12. *Guru Granth*, Guru Nanak, Malhar, Vara, 22. 2. p. 1288.  
Bhai Gurdas, Var, 1. 30.

13. According to the *Guru Granth* and Bhagat Ravi Das an authority states that Bhagat Kabir was born to Muslim parents ; see *Guru Granth* : Ravi Das, Malhara : 2. 2. p. 1293.

reality in monism to be incorporated into the *Guru Granth*. The gurus emphasised the practical aspect of their teachings which led to gathering around them a formidable force of spirited and spiritual people who travelled in the whole of Asia far and wide to preach this new rejuvenated *dharma* for this *kali yuga* (age of quarrel).<sup>14</sup>

In this way the gurus synthesised all the past Hindu and Islamic philosophies, and brought a confluence in an organised manner for the temporal and spiritual uplift of all humanity without any discrimination. This glorious philosophy continued without a break from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh and is embodied in the book today known as the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

All the gurus were loved by both Hindus and Muslims alike for their earnest, honest living,<sup>15</sup> the only exception being those who were in power and politically egoistic, or were extremely materialistic. Such persons could not face virtue, and the honour, name and fame of the gurus created grave jealousy begetting all its evil effects upon them. Thus the politicians pounced upon the gurus, their families and their pupils (Sikhs) with a very strong barbaric hand.<sup>16</sup> All the gurus outspokenly condemned such hypocrisy in very strong words.<sup>17</sup> They thus stood steadfast for virtuous *dharma* in its defence so much as to sacrifice their own and their families' lives. It is a unique record of sacrifice in defence of *dharma* in world history.

### PUNJAB'S CULTURAL SET UP

Before Guru Nanak the whole of northern India and especially the Punjab, for almost the last five centuries had been politically integrated into the organized Islamic world. In the field of language, Sanskrit and Arabic were the two extremes. Various dialects came into being to blend these two, namely Sanskriti, Saurasini, Lahandi, Pothori,

14. Bhai Gurdas, Var 1.23. 29.31.37.38.

15. Bhai Gurdas, Var : 1.37.24 4.20 etc.

16. *Dasam Granth*, 'Zafar Namah' : 31. 11. to 75 and till the end.

17. Ibid., '33 Sawyas', 18 to 33.



Multani, Dogri etc. And also another language, Urdu, which was the language of the Turks and Mughals and had come into existence due to the inter-mixture of various races and tribes, thus becoming a meeting point not only of the common men but also of courtiers and royalty. Though Persian was the official language of the State at Lahore, Urdu blending with it the Sanskrit, became the sophisticated general language of the royal court. In this way Punjab became a land of cultural fusion, having multifarious languages, and many a shade of ideas and cultures. The most passive were met by the Uddasi order of Guru Nanak, the intellectual were met by the Nirmala order of Guru Gobind Singh and the very active were met by the khalsa created by Guru Gobind Singh. It is out of this milieu that Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh initiated a process of confluence of the apparent diverse religions and philosophies of Hinduism and Islam in the form now known as Sikhism (*nirmal panth*, pure path).<sup>18</sup> Sikhism incorporates the following facets : the ascetic spiritual, the intellectual spiritual, and the active temporal.

### PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION

It is needless to say that Guru Nanak and all his successors could only then have brought about this confluence when they were thoroughly conversant and aware of the socio-philosophical set-up of their age. Guru Amar Das says : "Great people deliberate in context."<sup>19</sup>

Guru Nanak was a prophet in his own right,<sup>20</sup> also one in spirit with his nine successors,<sup>21</sup> and hence he had no need to give any direct quotations nor make precise references to texts of Vedic or Kitabic scriptures as is expected to be done by scholars (*Acharya*). Such a scholar is always firstly trained in the verbal or written tradition (*sampradaya*) of comparative study of religions and philosophies so that he may be able to pin-point the exact parallel texts. Instances are to

18. *Guru raunth*, Sawaie Guru Amar Das, 17. 3. 1. 1395, and Guru Arjan, 19. 7. p. 1409 and these support Bhai Gurdas's quotation in *Vara* : 1. 45.

19. *Ibid.*, Guru Amar Das, *Suhi* : 3. 1. 8. p. 755.

20. See foot notes 21. 22. 23.

21. *Dasam Granth*, 'Vichitra Natak,' 5 : 7.

be seen of parallel verses in the *Gītā* and *Upanishads*.<sup>22</sup> In the same manner there are parallel passages in the *Guru Granth*, *Dasam Granth*, Bhai Guru Dasa's works and also in Bhai Nand Lal's works which are to be found and seen as corresponding to the Vedas, Purānas, Gītā and the Kitābs.<sup>23</sup> For any one who has made a critical study of the revelations of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, there is no doubt left that within the philosophical tradition and heritage the gurus when even apparently affirming or praising, repudiating or negating a particular religious mode, philosophical doctrine, scripture's text or statute every time amplified their own views by added nuances of very subtle implications. An appraisal of this character alone makes it very clear that Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh had a very definite and positive attitude towards the Hindu and Islamic scriptures and philosophies.

All the gurus met people from all walks of life in India and Asia. Guru Nanak was one of the greatest travellers of his age. He met men ranging from the sage to the savant, from the poorest Lalo to the richest, from the mystic Gorakh Nath to the Emperor Babur of India.<sup>24</sup> Hence all the gurus were thoroughly conversant with Hindu and Islamic fundamentals. Those texts that have been interpreted through comparative study by the very learned 'Nirmala Sikh' and also the learned 'Khalsa Sikhs' in these schools of philosophy are now being re-interpreted through the critical study of the modern scholars in the modern idiom. The 'Nirmala' school of philosophy was created by Guru Gobind Singh for this very purpose of study.<sup>25</sup> Though the old

22. *Gītā*, 2. 20, *Katha Upanishad* : 2. 18 or  
*Gītā*, 3. 42. *Katha Upanishad* : 3. 10. 11 or  
*Gītā*, 15. 1. *Katha Upanishad*, 3. 1 etc.

23. *Guru Granth*, Guru Amar Das : Bihagra Var : 6 2. p. 550 refers to the allegory of the two birds mentioned in the *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3 1.1. also referring to the *Gītā* by name Bhagat Nanak Dav : Gonda : 6. 2. p. 874 *Gita*. 9. 25 and *Dasam Granth* : Akal Ustat : 87 *Mundaka Upanishad* : 2. 1. 1 and *Gian Prabodh* : 126 to 130-*Gītā* : 2. 23. 24. 25. etc.

24. Bhai Gurdas, Var : 26. 31.

25. *Guru Tirath Samgraha*, p. 271 to 275 and *Guru Girarath Kosh* both by Pandit Tara Singh Narotam Nirmala who states that the creator of the philosophical schools of the Nirmala was Guru Gobind Singh who ordered Bhai Mani Singh to learn from Pandit Karam Singh Nirmala who later began the Khalsa School Missionary to preach the Sikh Army.

scholars were not surprised by this exposition, today those comparative studies are very pleasant and surprising to all who now know of the parallel teachings of the gurus. They become even more impressive when shown to be a manifestation of the one harmonising the diversity of Hinduism and Islam. This confluence of the eternal realities and fundamental truths of both Hindu and Islamic philosophies were adapted according to changes of the age, the transformation being only in the manifestive form and not in spirit which is the eternal dharma.

### PURPOSE OF AFFIRMATION AND NEGATION

In philosophy there is affirmation and negation (*nishēda* or repudiation). The intention or motive of them is never taken literally. They can only exist when there are two or more things to be compared. Affirmation indirectly negates the inferior, and that which negates the inferior is indirect affirmation of the superior. Guru Tegh Bahadur says :<sup>26</sup>

“Discard praise and negation ;  
Investigate the formless object.  
But Nanak, this is a difficult game ; (play)  
Which only a rare worthy (*gurumukh*) knows ;”

It is said in the Mahabharata :

“Adharma is seen to be Dharma,  
And Dharma as Adharma ;  
The reason being difference of place and time.”<sup>27</sup>

Hence affirmation is of the eternal and negation is of the transient. The gurus have all affirmation for only the eternal substantial cause which is the eternal reality. They have negated the efficient and energetic causes that are transient or false (*mithya*), which are only dependent upon form (*rūpa*) and names (*nāma*). This may be clarified by an allegory. A gold ornament is gold in its material cause, which exists before and after the ornament ;

26. *Guru Granth*, Guru 1. 2. p. 219.

27. *Mahabharata* : Shanti Prava : 79. 32.

gold's name is its uncreated name (*akṛtrima nāma*). The forms (*rūpa*) that are transient like a ring, bangle etc, are, therefore, only formal names (*kṛtrima nāma*) which not being eternal are phenomenal. It is for this reason that gurus made reference to both kinds of names. Says Guru Arjun Dev :

“Through speech have I repeated  
your formal names (*kṛtrim nāma*)  
But your original (*nāma*) is ‘*sati-nāmu*’ ”<sup>28</sup>

and Guru Gobind Singh says :

“The wise express (God) through formal  
names (*kaṛam nāma*)”<sup>29</sup>

It is the transient that is seen negated though only in reference to the eternal noumena. Therefore, all that is transient, even God the doer (*karta*), God's avtaras, gods (*devtas*) etc., and all the universe and its many religions that are engulfed within time (*kāla*), space (*vesha*) and causation (*karma*) are phenomenal predicates of the real, the eternal, and are, therefore, unreal (*mithya*). The substantial cause itself not being subject to time, space and causation is eternal. Thus it is the only reality, as Guru Gobind Singh says<sup>30</sup> :

“Some worship Brahman, and some worship Mahesha ;  
Some say Vishnu is the lord of the universe,  
By whose worship all misery and unhappiness  
is removed  
Think a thousand time, o ignorant !  
In the end all will desert thee.  
Realise that as testimony, which was,  
is, and will be.”

In this manner Shri Krishna in *Gītā* referring to his formal name, says<sup>31</sup> :

28. *Guru Granth, Guru Arjan* : Maru Solahe : 11 2. 20. p. 1083.

29. *Dasam Granth, Japa*, 1 1.

30. *Dasam Granth*, 33 Sawye : 15 & 16 thus being the formal and final causes and all collocation.

31. *Gītā* : 7124.

“The fools reckon me as form, being formless,  
They do not see the purpose (of my avtar’s  
and their names)  
I am eternal, the most exalted.”

and in the same strain Guru Gobind Singh says<sup>32</sup> :

“Whoever refers to me (form) as God (formless)  
he will fall into the deep basin of hell.”

All this meets the opening lines of the *Guru Granth*<sup>33</sup> :

“Originally real ; in the beginning real ;  
Now real ; O Nanak ! will ever be real.”

#### THE GURU'S PHILOSOPHY

The above canon may be explained allegorically thus : originally an ornament of gold, in the beginning of its making it was gold, now as an ornament it is gold and on the dissolution of the ornament's form when it has no name as such, it would still be nothing other than gold. It is for this reason that Guru Arjan says :

“On the dissolving of an ornament it is  
referred to only as gold.”<sup>34</sup>

In this manner the gurus clearly state that there is nothing but God, thus making Him the universe's substantial, efficient, energetic, formal and final cause. Therefore, only when the unity underlying the diversity is realised, there is the intuition of the noumenal, the eternal reality, behind the phenomenal.<sup>35</sup>

All diversity that is cognizable as the phenomena thus must be within this only, one ! It is, therefore, now clear that the Guru

32. *Dasam Granth*, Vichitra Natak, 6. 32.

33. *Guru Granth*, Japu : 1. p. 1.

34. Guru Arjan, Dhanasri. 5. 3. p. 672.

35. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan ; Maru Solahe : 11. 2. p. 1082-1085.

envisions the only one ; the phenomenal many being like a mirage. Therefore, by definition 1 = 'Aek' implies *advaita* is all, being formless transcendental reality (*niraṅkar*) of which the phenomenal predicates (*guṇa*) are : *sattava*, *raja* and *tamas*.<sup>36</sup> Guru Arjan says.<sup>37</sup>

"Self (God) being formless is formfull,  
One is with and without constituents (*guṇas*)  
Only One being deliberated  
Nanak ! One is the many."

Guru Arjan says :

"Say Nanak ! The Guru (Master) removeth delusion ;  
Only Allah is *Parbrahma*."<sup>38</sup>

All religions and their scriptures cover all phases of humanity. Thus it deals with all phases of men's temporal and spiritual living, constructing a steady graduation according to human intellect which may be brought under the four headings in the three theoretical stages within the scriptures. This is referred to by Shri Krishna in a dialogue with Uddhava in the *Bhāgvat Purāṇa* thus :

"There are only three yogas that I have mentioned  
For the benevolence of man :  
*Karam* (gross action by the body) *Bhagti*  
(subtle action through devotion done by the mind)  
and *Jñāna* (intellectual knowledge through  
metaphysics),  
There is no other method what-so-ever."<sup>39</sup>

These stages are referred to by the gurus in the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the Hindu and Sufi names as : 1. *karma yoga* : *shariyat* (ritualism) ; 2. *bhagti yoga* : *tariquat* (devotionalism) ; 3. *paroksha jñāna yoga* : *marfat* (theoretical knowledge) and its realisation is the last

36. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan, Maru Solhe : 10, 1, 13. p 1082.

37. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan, Bavana Akhari, 2, 1, p. 250 ; also see *Dasam Granth*, 3 Sawaye : 15.

38. *Guru Granth* : Guru Arjan, Ramkali, 45 34 5. p 897.

39. *Bhagvat Purana*, 1, 20, 6.

stage beyond the scope of any book's theoretical knowledge and is known as *aproksha jñāna haqiqut* (realisation).<sup>40</sup> This stage is referred to by Guru Arjan in this way: 'Beyond the Veda and Kitabs: Nanak's Lord is evidently realised.'<sup>41</sup> It is for this reason, realisation which comes from the scriptures is beyond their arena. Guru Arjan says :

"By merely reading the Veda, Kitab and Smritis, and all the scriptures : liberation is not attained'  
Only upon realisation of One Eternal One,  
One is competent to become pure."<sup>42</sup>

and for this reason Bhai Gurdas says :

"By saying sugar one's mouth is not sweetened  
and by saying fire cold is not dispelled."  
But realisation cannot come without a study of the *Jñāna Yoga*.<sup>43</sup>

It is for this reason that Bhagat Kabir says :

"The Turak (Muslim) knows the Tarkat (way-method)  
The Hindu, the Veda and Purānas (literally).  
For mind's realisation, study mataphysics (*Jñāna*).<sup>44</sup>

According to Guru Nanak, the definition of *Sikhi* (Sikhism) is : "Sikhi is pondering over the Guru's Teachings."<sup>45</sup> Then the natural question arises : what is the ultimate teaching of the Guru. To this, Guru Teg Bahadur says :

"Realise the One outside and within thee,  
This is the knowledge the Guru bestows.  
But without self (*ātman*) investigation ;  
The veil of delusion is not removed."<sup>46</sup>

40. *Guru Granth*, Maru Solahe : 12.3.3. p. 1083.

41. *Ibid.*, Asa, 105. 3.4. p. 397.

42. *Guru Granth*, Suhi, 50.3.3 p. 747

43. Bhai Gurdas, Chanda, 437 etc

44. *Guru Granth*, Bhagat Kabir, Bavan Akhari, 21. p. 250.

45. *Ibid.*, Guru Nanak : Asadi Var : 5.2. p. 465.

46. *Ibid.*, Guru Teg Bahadur ; Dhanasri : 1.2. p. 684.

To remove the veil of delusion is the ultimate object, whereby realisation may come to a student of philosophy. The vedic *darshanas* have postulated three categories :<sup>47</sup>

1. Ārambha Vāda<sup>47</sup> the theory of atomic agglomeration, accepted by Purava Mimamsa, Nyaya and Vaisheshika.
2. Pariṇāma Vāda :<sup>48</sup> The theory of unfolding (evolution) and five *tattvas*, accepted in a way also by Vaisheshika.
3. Vivarta Vāda.<sup>49</sup> the theory of illusion accepted in a way by all the six, but mainly by Vedanta which further categorises delusion simultaneously with five forms of illusion (*bhrama*) viz.,
  - (i) *Bheda Bhrama* (illusion of cleavage) which is like an image reflected in a mirror.<sup>50</sup>
  - (ii) *Kṛtvā Bhrama* (illusion of creativity) like a metal in fire seeming to be fire itself.<sup>51</sup>
  - (iii) *Samga Bhrama* : (illusion by contact) like an earthen pot and ether, thus it tends to split ether.<sup>52</sup>
  - (iv) *Vikara Bhrama* (illusion of change) like sand seen as mirage<sup>53</sup> or rope seen as a serpent,<sup>54</sup> or a seed as a tree<sup>55</sup> etc.
  - (v) *Satya Bhrama* : (illusion of truth) like gold and an ornament seeming to be two.<sup>56</sup>

47. Ibid., Guru, Suhi ; 2. p. 1364 ; Gauri : 3. p. 340 and *Dasam Granth*, Shabd Hazare, 31. 8. 2

48. Ibid., Guru Ram Das, Suhi, 24. 15. 4. 3. p. 736 etc.

49. Ibid., Guru Arjan Dev : Sanskriti Saloka, 30, p. 1356 etc.

50. Ibid., Guru Teg Bahadur : Sortha : 53. p. 632, etc.

51. Ibid., Guru Amar Das ; Asa Chanta : 7.2 5.7.2. p. 441.

52. Ibid., Bhagat Ravi Das ; Sortha : 1. p. 657. 658.

53. Ibid., Guru Arjan ; Sortha : 22.1.2. p. 615.

54. Ibid., Bhagat Ravi Das ; Sortha : 1.3. p. 658.

55. Ibid., Guru Arjan, Suhi : 1.2. p. 736 and Gauri Kabir ; 3. p. 340.

56. Ibid., Guru Arjan, Suhi ; 1.2. p. 736 and Bhagat Ravi Das, Sortha ; 1.3 p. 658 etc.



Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh emphatically state that when delusion is removed the realisation of the one comes. Says Guru Arjan :

“Due to delusion there is greed,  
attachment and  
Transformation ‘Maya’ :  
Delusion removed, then ‘I’  
*Ekamkara* (Monism is attained),”<sup>57</sup>

#### PHILOSOPHY OF CONVICTION (NISHTHĀ)

According to Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh the object of all philosophies is the realisation of the One. Says Guru Arjan :

“Proclaim all the Veda and Shastras ;  
Not to proclaim another  
Originally, in the beginning,  
now and ever to be ;  
O Nanak ! there is only One.”

The One therefore, is the same for the Hindu and the Muslim. We may repeat Guru Arjan :

“Says Nanak ! The Guru removeth delusion :  
Only (I) Allah is *Parbrahm*.”<sup>58</sup>

and Guru Gobind Singh Says :

“From whosoever’s mind delusion is removed ;  
Before him ; who is Hindu, or who is Turak.”<sup>59</sup>

But though confluence came about nearly five hundred years ago, it is still not evident to all. It is, therefore, not attainable without thorough knowledge within tradition, for Guru Amar Das says :

57. Ibid., Guru Arjan, Suhi : 1.3, p 736.

58. Guru Arjan, Gauri Bavan Akhari. 20, 1. p. 254

59. *Dasam Granth*, 24 Avtaras I. 19.

## MRIGENDRA SINGH

“The name exists secretly in Kali Yuga ;  
Hari remains Omniperfect in all His parts.  
The Jewel as the Name, appears only in those hearts ;  
Who run for protection to the Guru.”<sup>60</sup>

Says the Gītā :

“Out of a thousand is a rare that makes an effort  
Again out of those thousands a rare attempts to proceed  
Again out of those thousands a rare reaches the object  
Rare is the one who sees Me (The Ultimate Reality)”<sup>61</sup>

In this way the Guru gave a universal eternal message for humanity in general that man should not be bound by the fetters of any religion. When the yogis wanted to bring Guru Nanak into their religious creed he showed his contribution by synthesising his philosophy with yoga relegating theirs to the secondary place. The Sufi pīrs of Multan although accepting Guru Nanak as a Sufi did not want him to settle down in that town. They allegorically paid homage by a bowl filled to the brim with milk,<sup>62</sup> thus indicating that the town was already full of saints. In reply Guru Nanak put a crystal of sugar into the milk and placed a Jasmine flower upon it, thus indicating, firstly, that he would merge in them like sugar in milk and also he would remain aloof like the flower. Secondly, as sugar sweetens milk he would sweeten their insipid philosophy. Thirdly, as a flower attracts bees his philosophy would be the focus and cause of all attraction. In this way Guru Nanak showed that he belonged to no particular form of religion, and Guru Arjan confirms this in the these words :<sup>63</sup> •

“Neither am I Hindu nor Musalman  
This body and spirit is of Allāh-Rāma.

This is synonymous with Rumi's views even though the world considers Rumi a Muslim Sufi. He says :<sup>64</sup>

“What is to be done, O Musalmans ?  
For I do not recognise myself.

60. *Guru Granth*, Guru Amar Das ; Parbhat : 4.2. p. 1334.

61. *Gītā*, 7.3.

62. *Ibid* , Var, 1-41.

63. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan ; Bhairo : 3.4. p. 1136.

64. *Life and Work of Rumi*, Afzal Iqbal, p. 120.

I am neither Christian, nor Jew,  
Nor Gabr, Nor Musalman."

The traditional philosophical schools of Indian philosophies and the *Sanyasis* of Shamkar's school considered the Guru's philosophy as the same Monism as theirs, considering him also to be a saint (*Sanyasi*). Referring to this episode Guru Ram Das says :<sup>65</sup>

"All the Yogis, Digambar and Sanyasis that are, and  
The Khata-Dharshana (six philosophical schools)  
Deliberated and went, taking abode."

Thus they all accepted the supremacy of Guru Amar Das and paid homage and took refuge in him. The Guru differentiated his monistic philosophy as mentioned earlier with reference to the two eternal traditions of the ascetic and active schools; their being of ascetic *sanyasa yoga* and his own being of active *raja yoga*.<sup>66</sup> Likewise in the time of Guru Arjan when the Vaishnavas who all partook of dualism, and were saturated with devotion (*bhagti*) considered that the Guru's philosophy was of the Vaishnava order, then Guru Arjan said :<sup>67</sup>

"The Smriti, scriptures, Veda and Purānas ;  
Deliberate upon Parbraham,  
The Yogis, Yatis, Vaishnavas and Ramdas,  
Have no knowledge of eternal Brahm."

By Guru Arjan's request the foundation stone of the Hari Mandir (Golden Temple) Amritsar was laid by the Sufi saint Mian Mir, creating a Hindu-Musalman confluence in the temporal living of the people. It is in this very spirit that Guru Gobind Singh gives his universal message to man from China to France, the then known world. There is an emphatic mention of each country, nation and tribe in the verses of *Akal Ustat* from 254 to 266, further referring to the unity of two basic religions of that age in this manner :<sup>68</sup>

65. *Guru Granth*, Guru Ram Das, Tukhari : 10.4.3. p. 1116.

66. *Ibid.*, 3. 3 ; also foot note 16 & 17.

67. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan ; Gonda : 17.15.2, p. 867.

68. *Dasam Granth*, Akal Ustat, 86. This is synonymous to Guru Arjan Dev ; Bhairon p. 1136.

“Allāh and Abhekh (ungarbed God) are the same ;  
 Purān and Qurān are the same,  
 Being one material cause, to make all.....”

It is for this reason that Guru Gobind Singh has at the end of ‘Ram Avtar’ emphatically expressed unity of Hindu and Islamic philosophies in these words :“<sup>9</sup>

“Ever since I took refuge at thy feet,  
 Since then my eyes (spiritual) see no other ;  
 Ram, Rahim, Purān, Qurān. are believed to be many,  
 Not (*mata*) comprehended as One  
 (In the ultimate object),  
 The Smriti, Shastras and all the Vedas  
 (By the dualistic)  
 Are said to be diverse,  
 I (*hama*) know them as One (*ekana*)  
 O ! Exalted holder of the sword in hand,  
 By thy grace, I have not spoken,  
 all is deliberated by thee.”

Here Guru Gobind Singh indicates the highest realisation of monistic philosophy by merging himself with the only God, removing his ego (*haumain*) ; Hence this quotation becomes a revelation of God.

#### WHO IS A SIKH

The definition of a Sikh is stated earlier. But the question is : Is not Sikhism a religion today ? The answer is, true, it is, but only for the unacquainted it has form, but still not like the other religions. It actually has three forms within itself. This may be explained as such. As the general public of India by nationality are Indians, so all the believers of the teachings of the gurus may be considered as Sikhs. Secondly, as the intellectuals like the rulers, judges, lawyers are also Indians, likewise the ‘Nirmala’ order of the Sikhs created by Guru Gobind Singh to be missionaries, religious teachers, guides etc. for all the Sikhs, constitutes sikhism. Lastly as an army with its uniform and laws of discipline are also essential to defend the State and are also Indians, so was the ‘Khalsa Singh’

formed as the army with its uniform and laws of the Sikhs for the defence of universal *Dharma*. This Khalsa was not created in any hostility to Islam, but only in defence against the barbaric hostility in the garb of Islam by Aurangzeb. As Guru Gobind Singh in his 'letter of victory' to Aurangzeb says :<sup>70</sup>

“You (Aurangzeb) have not scruples,  
No faith in religion.  
Not reckoning the Lord (God),  
Not having faith in Muhammad.”

Guru Gobind Singh had over 500 Muslim soldiers given to him by Sufi Saint Buddhu Shah of Sadhaura. The saint also sent his four sons who fought and died for the sake of the Guru's universal *dharma*, though they were known as muslim sufis. Thus Guru Gobind Singh within the tradition of Guru Nanak's confluence of Hinduism and Islam perpetuated this tradition in the form of his Nirmala missionaries and Khalsa army. But that does not mean that only a Nirmala or only a Khalsa is a Sikh. It is said, in the *Mahabharat* :<sup>71</sup>

Dharma that condemns a Dharma, but narrow Dharma,  
That Dharma which removes contradictors, is Dharma.

It, therefore, may be clear that whenever there is mass production of philosophy it becomes dogmatic and ritualistic due to the sway of the ignorant masses. Hence degeneration creeps in. This is true about Sikhism as shown by the general masses today. But nevertheless it becomes the duty of all literate men firstly to try to understand the Guru's philosophy and then further to educate the masses.

For it is mentioned in the *Aitreya-Maitraiya Samveda*, that the sage enquired : 'Will it be that there will be no book in Kali Yuga or no scholars or no saints, that it will be such a declined age?' Upon this, Maitaraiya replied ;

70. *Zafar Namah*, 1.46 to 49.

71. *Mahabharata Vana Parva*, 131. 11.

“There will be libraries in each home,  
 There will be scholars in each institution,  
 There will be saints in every forest,  
 But rare will be a Brahman Jñāna (realised) In Kali Yuga.”

### FUTURE

It is true, Guru Nanak says :

“Rare is none who ponders over revelation (*Vaṇi*).”<sup>72</sup>

But there is one thing Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh have done by the *Ādi* and *Dasam Granths*. They have given a universal message without forming a sectarian philosophy, and it is for this very reason that Guru Gobind Singh ultimately gave his guruship to the Guru Granth, first himself paying his respects and homage in tradition and then for all to follow suit, thus accepting it as his own philosophy and the final word. He gave secondary place to his own compositions or to the laws for the Nirmala or Khālsā Sikhs.<sup>73</sup> Thus he indicated continuation of the spirit of all formal religions and established that universal way of temporal and spiritual life which was rejuvenated a number of times. But Sikhism has no formal form so that it may live till eternity without form and name as only one for the benevolence of all humanity. Hence a confluence can only occur in an active monism. Guru Arjan says<sup>74</sup> :

“The egg of delusion has burst ;  
 The mind is (now) illuminated.  
 Cutting the fetters off the feet ;  
 The Guru frees the captive.”

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72. *Rahat Namas* of Guru Gobind Singh.

73. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan, Maru : 14.5.1. p. 1002.

74. *Ibid.*, Guru Arjan, Maru : 14.5.1. p. 1002.

# SIKHISM AS AN OFF-SHOOT OF TRADITIONAL HINDUISM AND AS A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM

**Rajinder Kaur**

It is very easy to use the word 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism', but difficult to define it. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, "Nothing is more difficult to be defined than Hinduism."

"The word Hindu is said not to be discoverable in ancient Indian literature. Indeed, its first occurrence is reported in a work of eighth century A.D., and there it means 'a people,' and not "an associate of a specific religion."<sup>1</sup> Yet it is clear that it is a very old word. Persians and the people of western and central Asia used it to denote the inhabitants of an area beyond the river Indus. The early name for this river was 'Sindhu,'<sup>2</sup> and from it word 'Hindu' is said to be derived. "A Chinese pilgrim writing in the seventh century A.D., says that the Central Asia called India 'Hindu' (he says Hsintu), but he continues, "this is not at all a common name..... and the most suitable name for this is 'Arya Desha,' which means the Noble Land."<sup>3</sup>

The use of the word in connection with a particular religion is still later. Professor Dasgupta thinks that this usage of it may not date back more than three hundred years. Probably the use of the word comes in with Muslim invasions for differentiating the inhabitants and the foreign rulers. The Arab name for the country being Hindustan.

1. Bouquet A.C., *Hinduism*, Introduction
2. Still commonly used name of this river in the Punjab is "Sindhu."
3. Jawahar Lal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 51.

According to the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Hinduism is the title applied to that form of religion which prevails among the vast majority of the present population of India. In the western world, Hinduism stands as the commonly used title of the specific religion which is sharply distinguishable from Islam."<sup>4</sup> Hinduism as a religion is difficult to be understood. Hinduism lacks a church and clearly defined dogmas. There are no beliefs or institutions which are common to all Hindus<sup>5</sup>, and which may mark them off from others. "Every belief considered as basic to Hindus, has been rejected by one group or the other. Thus the south Indian Shaivite sect of Lingayats reject in theory many of the allegedly basic beliefs of the Hindus, including the revelatory character of the Vedas. This sect also does not believe in the theory of *karma*. The atheistic and hedonistic sect of Charvakas rejected every traditional idea including *dharma*, still they remained Hindus." "Hinduism as a faith is vague, amorphous, many sided, all things to all men. It is hardly possible to define it, or indeed to say precisely whether it is a religion or not, in the usual sense of the term. In its present form as well as in the past, it embraces many beliefs and practices, from the highest to the lowest, often opposed and contradicting each other."<sup>6</sup>

In recent times attempts have been made to define Hinduism. It is considered to be the religion, which has grown and evolved on the soil of India, as a natural consequence of man's quest for truth. The earliest records of religion which have descended to our times, are that of pure nature worship, adoration of the sun, moon, wind, rain, clouds, dawn etc. Anything that impressed the soul with awe or was regarded as capable of exercising good or evil influence became an object not only of adoration but of prayer. However, earth, mountains, rivers, plants, might be supplicated as divine powers, the horse, the cow, the bird of omens and other animals might be invoked.

In the course of centuries the worship of nature and natural objects lead to their personification and thus polytheism took its

4. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

5. *Ibid*.

6. Jawahar Lal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 52.



birth. The dissatisfaction with the various gods lead to theism, which paved the way for monotheism, which in turn culminated in the monism or absolutism of Sankracharya, later to the qualified monism of Ramanuja, and in the end led to the Bhakti movement.

This is, what is commonly understood by Hinduism but there are people who try to make the definition of Hinduism still more comprehensive and all inclusive. In ancient times, the forefathers of the so called 'Hindus' did not speak of their religion as 'Hinduism' but as 'Arya Dharma,' therefore, there are people who under Arya Dharma aim to include all religions of Aryan origin, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Arya Samajists, Hindu Orthodox etc. Such people make Arya Dharma and Hinduism as synonymous terms. Lakshmi Narayan temple of Delhi is a living example of such believers.

Hinduism as the dominant creed of India is an amalgamation of all its evolutionary phases, the worship of nature, polytheism, monotheism, monism or absolutism. Thus it is a jumble of ideas which have not been made but have grown. "It is a jungle not a building. It is a living example of great national paganism, such as might have existed in Europe if Christianity had not become the state religion of the Roman Empire, if there had remained an incongruous jumble of old superstitions, Greek philosophy and oriental cults such as the worship of Sarapis or Mithras."<sup>7</sup> Thus Hinduism comes to be a term applicable to a particular culture, a society, a race rather than a specific religion, as there is no other way of becoming a Hindu except by birth. Hinduism cannot be defined as a religion, but it can be a religious culture, having so many religions and religious practices in its fold.

On the eve of the advent of Sikhism, Hinduism was just a mess of contradictory beliefs and a jumble of ideas and religious practices. Whatever might be the intellectual or philosophical excellence of Hinduism, the religion of an average Hindu was confined to the worship of idols, the observance of certain formalities, the perfor-

7. Eliot, Charles, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. I, p. 41.

mance of some complicated rites, pilgrimage to certain sacred places and bathing in the holy tanks and rivers. Buddhism was on the decline as it had become corrupt and mystical, it had passed into a degraded form of the old Brahmanical faith which it had formerly superseded.

Over the degenerated and degraded condition of Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam had a superiority. Islam was stretching its roots rather deep and fast spreading its wings. "The numerous conversions to Islam were not so much the fruit of active persecution, as the result of the desire to gain the favour of the court or the result of the missionary preachings."<sup>8</sup> Muslim missionaries entered India as early as 712 A.D. There might be political reasons for the fast conversion to Islam but the simple monotheism of the Mohammadans had a definite appeal over the then prevalent Hinduism.<sup>9</sup> Thus Islam was telling upon the very roots of Hindu society, and Hindu religion was in great danger especially in the Punjab, as Punjab had for long been a Muslim dominion and thus had remained cut off from the religious currents of the rest of India.

The numerous converts to Islam had their inherited traditions with them. With the impact of Hinduism, Islam also changed its character. Like the gods of the Hindu pantheon, the *pirs* and *shaheeds* of the Muslims received a hallowed glory and were being worshipped alike. In spite of the changing character of Islam, its monotheism still retained appeal specially when it was the state religion and was being backed by the state. Thus the number of Muslims in India was on the increase. Yet the spirit of both Hinduism and Islam was hidden beneath a mass of formalities and extraneous observances. The unity of Godhead was lost in the worship of numerous *avtars* and divinities; *pirs* and *dargahas*, pilgrimage and empty ritualistic practices had taken the place of the real devotion and superstitions had driven truth away.<sup>10</sup>

8. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 208.

9. Hinduism is a growing and developing religion. It is dynamic in character. What Hinduism is today was not there at that time.

10. Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, p. 18.

There was no religion. As such it was a time of religious chaos. Religion was the monopoly of a few priests, *mullahs* and *pandits*, the common man had to remain satisfied with the performance of certain rites and rituals, the meaning of which he was quite ignorant. Guru Gobind Singh summed up the religious conditions that as, "some were worshipping the stones, others had put 'lingam' around their necks. Some were thinking that God resided in the south, while others were bowing their head towards the west as if He resided there. Some were worshipping the idols, while others were worshipping the dead. In short, everyone was busy in empty rituals and religious practices, without having any enlightenment of God.

Religious tyranny was there, but it was either due to or was the by-product of political tyranny then operative. It was a time of complete political suppression and oppression. The Muslim rulers were at enmity with all things Hindu. Guru Nanak was born at the time of Behlol Lodi. Sikandar Lodi was bent upon destroying Hindu religion. "Sikandar was firmly attached to the Muhammadan religion, and made a point of destroying all Hindu temples. Extra taxes were levied on Hindus, they were openly prosecuted and molested for one petty reason or the other. Their life and property were both in danger."<sup>11</sup>

To the political tyranny was added the social tyranny of the caste system. Hindu society was sharply divided into various castes and it was impossible to cross the barriers of the caste system. The treatment that the high caste Hindus were receiving from their Muslim rulers, they were not reluctant to offer the same type of treatment to their own low caste brothers. The low caste people were considered as untouchables. They were not allowed to enter the temples or listen to the sacred scriptures. They were deprived of religion and God altogether. Thus both earth and heaven were being denied to them.

The tragedy was that the people were tolerating all that without any protest or revolt. In fact Buddhism had for long been

11. Briggs, *op-cit*, vol. 1, p. 586.

the religion of the Punjab, and the Buddhist theory of *karma* and non-violence had a deep rooted effect on the minds of the receptive Punjabees with the result that their marshal spirit was completely crippled, and the Muslim invaders found it quite easy to cross over them. Probably their belief in the law of *karma* made them to reconcile to the wave of suppression let loose by the Muslim rulers on their Hindu subjects. They must have believed that the agony to which they were being subjected must be the result of some evil deeds committed by them in some past life and those who were cruel to them now would be punished for their sins in future, either in that life or in some life yet to come. Thus, they themselves need not make an effort to put an end to the political despotism. The same law of *karma* made the people of the low castes to accept their lot. To be born in a low caste was considered to be the result of some bad deeds committed by them in the past. Thus they need not grumble against their lot as they themselves were responsible for that.

In short at the time of the advent of Sikhism tyranny reigned supreme. It was in such a time that Guru Nanak and his nine successors came as the redeemer. They came to help the indolent and the down-trodden and to show them the path of salvation and make them rise against political and social tyranny. Like the Catholic religion Sikhism came up abruptly as a new religion, by a kind of crisis under the original influence of the inspired soul of Guru Nanak and developed under the personal influence and guidance of his successors. There is no doubt that environment must have influenced the new faith, but they can well have a negative influence. Sikhism is a prophetic religion with a set of prophets and a definite doctrine to reveal to mankind. If sikhism has some affinity with traditional Hinduism or Islam it does not mean that it is an offshoot of the one or the other. Sikhism was not a natural consequence of the synthesis and integration of ideas of the two religions or the natural culmination of Hinduism, as, without Guru Nanak, Sikhism would have been non-existent.

Sikhism is individual in character. Individuality means independence of growth; it is not necessarily unlikeness since man the

world over is the same so far as the aspects of his spirit are concerned. The resemblances between religions are essential traits that must exist between spiritual systems that aim at leading man to a higher life than that of lower passions and appetites. In religion it is said that there is no new thing but the same ideas are worked up again and again. God is one, spiritual experience of union or communion with Him, the gracious boon and converse with Him must also be of the same kind, and a minimum of it must be expressible in the same terms. In this sense all religions are one in essence. According to Bhai Gurdas, Sikhism was the third way of reaching God, the two ways Hinduism and Islam being already existent : *tisar pantk chalayon vad sur guhela*. It is the comparative and pragmatic use, disuse or misuse of the essential characteristics of religion that they become different and contradictory. It is only the political use of religions that they become opposite and hostile to each other.

# SIKHISM : AN EXPERIMENT IN NATIONAL INTEGRATION OF THE COUNTRY

**Taran Singh**

PRINCIPLES which Sikhism observed and worked upon for achieving national integration of India can be studied under the following patterns : scriptures, institutions and traditions of Sikhism :

- (i) The pattern of the Sikh scriptures, the *Guru Granth* and the intentions and principles underlying the same, and the *Dasam Granth*.
- (ii) The Sikh institutions of *sangat* (holy assembly), *pangat* (*langar* or free kitchen) and *gurdwara* (sikh temple).
- (iii) The Sikh tradition of fighting *adharma* and injustice even when it is directed against any other religion, individual or community.

## SIKH SCRIPTURES

The pattern of *Guru Granth* has been so conceived and worked out that it may be able to integrate various religions and *varṇas* of India, spiritually, religiously, socially and emotionally. Guru Nanak gave the idea of such a scripture, his successor gurus subscribed to it and worked to collect material for the *Granth*, particularly Guru Arjan, who collected most of the material and contributed major portion of the *Granth* in the form of his *bani* and edited the same in 1604 A. D. Guru Gobind Singh added the hymns of Guru Teg Bahadur to the *Guru Granth* and installed it as the Guru in 1708 A.D., abolishing the personal guruship.

The *Guru Granth* is an edited book, containing the spiritual and devotional writings of the saints of India, gurus of the Punjab

and some bards and devotees of the gurus. The writings of fifteen saints of India belonging to different parts of the country, with their dates ranging between the 12th and 17th centuries, speaking diverse languages, spiritually elevated through diverse faiths, forms of worship and disciplines, coming from high and low castes and *varṇas*, pursuing diverse professions for earning their livelihood, were purposely included in the holy book of the Sikhs. Jaidev, Farid, Ramanand, Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev and Tarlochan are some of the saints of the *Guru Granth*. If the implications of this design or pattern of a book of faith are understood, it will seem to be a unique phenomenon in the history of world religions. The implications are as under.

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in 1469 A.D. but the Sikh book of faith had started coming into being about three centuries before his birth. Jaidev of Bengal and Farid of Punjab had been born in 1170 and 1173 A.D. respectively. The two saints are the first and the earliest whose *bāni* has been included in the *Guru Granth*. Of the thirty-six writers of the *Guru Granth* only six are Sikh gurus of the Punjab while many of the remaining writers are non-Punjabis and non-Sikhs. Jaidev was a brahman of Bengal and realised God through Krishna worship; Namdev and Tarlochan, two friends, a low caste calico-printer and a Brahman, respectively, of Maharashtra were also Krishnites; Ramanand, Kabir and Ravidas: a brahman, a weaver and a cobbler respectively, were from Uttar Pradesh; Farid and Bhikhan were Muslim Sufi fakirs; the eleven bards of the Punjab were Krishna worshippers. The Sikh gurus were Khatri of Punjab and worshippers of the Nirguna to which realisation of all the *bhaktas* or saints, mentioned above had reached in due course. The utterances of all these constitute the *Guru Granth*.

The principle which underlies this pattern of the *Guru Granth* is that every Sikh gives the same reverence to the Sikh gurus which he gives to the saints of Bengal, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Sind etc. He bows to the *Guru Granth* and recites the *bāni* of all the writers included, with same devotion and reverence. In the central Sikh temple of Amritsar as well as in all other historical or local

*gurdwaras*, the hymns of all these saints and gurus of India are sung. The Sikhs pay homage to Muslim and Hindu saints of India, recite their writings with faith, reverence and devotion. Perhaps, it is not so in any other faith of the world.

The intentions of the Sikh *Granth* and the practice of the Sikhs, naturally, can draw nearer the people of Bengal, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, etc. to the Sikhs and vice versa. They develop natural love, respect and identity of views. They are integrated.

This pattern of the *Guru Granth* involves a principle which can make national integration really possible. India being basically spiritual and religious, Indians can be integrated under a practice which guarantees respect and reverence for all the religions, faiths, forms of worship.

Again, in the *Guru Granth*, Sikhism tried an experiment to bring diverse faiths and people together through cultural expressions. Music is an important form of cultural expression. The *Guru Granth* adopted verse as the medium of expression in all thirty-one *ragas* or musical measures of India, mostly classical.

The *ragas* and even the poetic forms and measures, employed in the *Guru Granth*, are likewise the representative ones of various areas and peoples of India as are its contents.\* Perhaps, *ragas* Asa, Suhi and Tilang were chiefly used by the Muslim Sufi fakirs but the gurus and the saints of India also sang in the same *ragas*. Rag Ramkali is the chief *raga* of the yogis but the greatest pieces of Guru Nanak's composition are found in this *raga*. Sri, Gauri, Gujar, Bilawal, Bhairi, Malhar, Parbhati are Aryan *ragas* and the same are used in the *Guru Granth*. Certain *ragas* of the *Guru Granth* as the Malhar and the Basant are seasonal *ragas*, sung at gatherings where people of all faiths, castes and creeds gather. Some of the *ragas* of *Guru Granth*, viz., Gujar, Maru, Tilang were popular in particular areas of India. Guru Nanak composed his hymns in nineteen *ragas*, Guru Amardas in seventeen, Guru Ramdas and Guru Arjan in thirty, Guru Teg Bahadur alone used *raga* Jai Jai Vanti, the 31st *raga* of the *Guru Granth*.



Sikhism experimented to work a synthesis of Vedic and Islamic thoughts and tried to avoid meaningless intricacies and controversies of the traditional schools of philosophy. Some of the saint-writers of the *Guru Granth* attempted the same synthesis. Sikhism rejected the Hindu social philosophy of *varnashrams*, but accepted the philosophical concepts regarding brahman, soul and transmigration. Monotheism was emphasised in Islam and Sikhism did the same. Some philosophical terminology of Islam and traditional schools was adopted with new connotation by the Sikh gurus.

This itself is an effort at integrating various faiths. But still more important is Guru Nanak's attitude towards the six traditional schools and other religions. His attitude is proclaimed in his following hymn in Rag Asa. 'Six are the systems, six their teachers, six their concepts. But the Teacher of teachers in one alone, who assumes many forms. O Lord, in whatever systems are thy praises sung, Save that—that is thy greatness. The seconds, the minutes, the hours, the solar and lunar days, the many seasons, are all created by one. Thus the creator assume many forms, though One'.

Guru Nanak tried to emphasise the highest common factor in all the religions of his time, existing side by side, but clashing with one another unnecessarily out of jealousy. *Varṇas*, castes and religions had disintegrated India and their role is no better even today. Guru Nanak raised a voice against *varṇa* and caste distinctions calling the belief of castes a folly and he called upon all men of different religions to live truthfully. Every man of religion accepts that living truthfully is higher than lip service to lofty ideals and formal elaborate worship. Guru Nanak stressed the ethics, in religions, alongwith theism. He called upon the Hindus to wear the sacred thread of compassion the cotton, contentment the thread, continence the knot, twist the truth thereof, asked the yogi to adopt the symbols of the garb of "contentment the ear-rings, humility the bowl;" and required the Muslims to say the *namaz* or prayer of "mercy the mosque, faith in God the prayer, honest living the Qur'an, humility the circumcision, good conduct the fast". For fashioning the ornament of sterling character, he advised all men to be goldsmiths with "chastity the smithy, patience the smith, understanding the

anvil, knowledge the tools, austerity the fire, fear of God the bellows, devotion to God the pot". This view of religions with emphasis on the practical side of life, should integrate all.

So, Guru Nanak gave the idea of a new type of scriptures, formed a wholesome attitude towards fellow religions and philosophical schools, tried to pick up the essentials from all faiths and leave out the non-essential, worked to shift the emphasis of religions from philosophical controversies and ritualistic tendencies to practical living ; thus providing directions for religious co-existence, philosophical accommodation and social integration.

The *Dasam Granth*, the collection of the writings of Guru Gobind Singh, is also held in high esteem by the Sikhs. In a very large portion of the *Dasam Granth*, Guru Gobind Singh tried to work up a revival of the Indian religious literature, of course, with some martial bias, to make the Indians realize their common heritage and tried to bring them together through pride of that heritage. He composed in classical Indian metres, the Braj language and in his personal style, what are called the *Chandi Charitras* and the twenty-four *avtaras* of Vishnu with the *avtars* of Brahma and Rudra. In the *Dasam Granth*, the *Markanda Puran*, the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabhart*a were reinterpreted by him. He reinterpreted much of the mythological and historical material of India. The *Guru Granth* itself contains numerous references and allusions from the ancient Indian literature, especially from *Purāṇas* and the epics. Guru Gobind Singh employed fifty-two poets in his court to translate various ancient texts of India with the object of unifying people of India through their own literature and culture.

### SIKH INSTITUTIONS

Guru Nanak travelled through the length and breadth of India and even abroad, and men of different faiths gathered round him wherever he went. He helped them come together and they, thereafter formed *sangats*. A *sangat* means a holy assembly or a congregation. Guru Nanak left a particular place to preach his message elsewhere but his devotees at that place continued to assemble

in *sangat*. Thus Sikh *sangats* were established all over India. As a principal, a man of any faith, caste or colour could join a Sikh *sangat*. All had have to sit on the same carpet and eat the same holy communion that was distributed at a conclusion of the service and the prayer. This institution shattered the barriers dividing men of different faiths and ranks and integrated the nation. •

The institution of *pangat* did the same thing more effectively in social settings. A *pangat* means a row of men sitting to partake from *langar* or free kitchen. All men, irrespective of creed, caste, colour or country could and can sit together and eat in a *pangat*. Sikhism experimented with the institution of *pangat* successfully.

Generally *sangats* and *pangats* are held in *gurdwaras*. Any man of any faith can enter any *gurdwara* or Sikh temple and participate in the service. The central Sikh Shrine at Amritsar, known as the Golden Temple has a distinction. The foundation stone of this Sikh temple was laid by a Muslim Sufi divine, Mian Mir. This Sikh temple has four doors which symbolise that any man of any faith can enter this temple from any side.

Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru got built a mosque for the spiritual benefit of his Muslim soldiers. No Sikh guru ever indulged in proselytization. The Sikh gurus asked people to truly practise the teachings of their own religions as all religions were efficacious to give salvation, only if they were practised sincerely. The gurus themselves visited the Hindu and Muslim centres of worship and had intimate relations with Hindu and Muslim divines and often held religious and philosophical dialogues with them in the most cordial atmosphere.

#### SIKH TRADITION

Guru Nanak raised a voice against *adharma*, injustice, political subjugation, social inequality and fanatic religiosity. He risked his life many times in such endeavours. Guru Amardas refused to submit to unjust discrimination. Guru Arjan suffered martyrdom for the freedom of worship, speech and expression. Guru Hargobind fought

for the rights of the down-trodden. But Guru Teg Bahadur's execution in 1675 under orders from Aurangzeb, had a significance and it set a norm for the Sikh concept of sacrifice. The Sikh concept of sacrifice is that a Sikh should fight for his own rights but he should fight as bitterly when *adharma* or injustice is directed against any other person, may be of any creed or religion. Guru Teg Bahadur died for the Hindu religion. The Hindus were the victim of proselytizing aggressiveness of the Mughals. They were weak and could not defend their right of worship in their own free way. Guru Teg Bahadur got up to defend their *dharma* and fought against injustice.

To sum up, right from Guru Nanak, Sikhism was ideally motivated, broad based and nationally inspired. It tried to inspire and carry with it the whole Indian nation. Sikhism was out to fight any type of tyranny and any form of subjugation. Religiously, it stood for tolerance, respect, love and co-operation among all the religions of India ; politically it was intolerant of imperialism of any type and was the sworn enemy of political subjugation ; socially it stood for fraternity, brotherliness and equality. Good of humanity is the real religion of Sikhism, Victory to the Lord, *Wahi guru Ki Fateh* is its ideal ; uphold the truth, *Sat Sri Akal* is its war-cry.

# THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM UPON THE THOUGHT OF GURU NANAK

W. H. McLeod

SIKHISM, writes Dr. A. C. Bouquet, "is the fruit of hybridization between Islam and Hinduism."<sup>1</sup> This is the usual interpretation of the religion of Gurū Nānak and his successors, and amongst western writers it would appear to be a universal assumption. According to this interpretation Sikhism is properly regarded as a blend of Hinduism and Islam, "an outstanding example of conscious syncretism,"<sup>2</sup> a noble attempt to fuse in a single system elements drawn from two separate and largely disparate religions. To quote another metaphor which evidently expresses this same interpretation : "Sikhism was born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam."<sup>3</sup>

Is this interpretation correct? Can Sikhism be regarded as a synthesis of ideas drawn from Hinduism and Islam? In a very broad sense we can accept the truth of this assessment. Other possible interpretations we must certainly reject. Sikhism cannot be located wholly within the area of Hinduism, it cannot be regarded as a sect of Islam, and we cannot accept the claim that it was delivered by direct, unmediated inspiration from on high. We must, however, proceed beyond this general interpretation to a detailed analysis of what it actually means and here we should expect a diversity of opinion. The general interpretation is, in fact, rarely subjected to a careful scrutiny, but it is clear from the brief enunciations which we are given that it almost always assumes a mingling of basic components, a genuine syncretism. With this assumption we are, I feel, bound to disagree. It is, I believe, based upon misleading English translations of Sikh

1. A. C. Bouquet, *Sacred Books of the World*, p. 313.

2. John B. Noss, *Man's Religions*, p. 272.

3. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. i, p. 17.

scriptures, particularly the works of Gurū Nānak, and to some extent upon an understanding of Persian rather than Puñjābī Sūfism.

In contrast to this "mixture" theory we can postulate an "admixture" theory, and it is this second interpretation which is advanced in this paper. It affirms a basically Hindu origin and holds that Muslim influence, although certainly evident, is nowhere of fundamental significance in the thought of Gurū Nānak. The religion of Gurū Nānak, and so of Sikhism as a whole, is firmly embedded in the Sant tradition of Northern India, in the beliefs of the so-called *Nirguna Sampradāya*. The categories employed by Gurū Nānak are the categories of the Sants, the terminology he uses is their terminology, and the doctrines he affirms are their doctrines. Where we encounter significant exceptions to this rule they point not to manifest Muslim influence but rather to reinterpretation by Gurū Nānak, or to the kind of recasting which has endowed his works with their distinctive clarity and coherence. This still leaves open the possibility of Muslim influence having been mediated to Gurū Nānak through Sant channels, but here too native Indian antecedents almost always appear to be the stronger alternative. In some cases such trails lead us back through the bhaktī tradition ; in others they branch off into Nāth belief. We are bound to acknowledge a considerable area of obscurity when seeking to survey the background of Sant doctrine, but insofar as it can be understood it generally points us back to Indian tradition, not to any version of Islam.

Let it not be supposed, however, that concepts issuing from Muslim sources are totally absent, or that the thought of Gurū Nānak contains nothing which suggests Muslim influence. This would not be correct. The Muslim contribution to the thought of Gurū Nānak is not of fundamental importance, nor is it to be dismissed wholly insignificant. This leads us to pose two specific questions relating to this general question of Muslim influence. First, from what Muslim sources did the influence come ? Secondly, what distinctively Muslim elements or other evidence of Muslim influence can be distinguished in the thought of Gurū Nānak ?

The first question has already been answered many times. The source of such Muslim influence as can be detected in the works of Gurū

Nānak has been identified as the thought of the Sūfīs. Two factors seen to point unmistakably to this conclusion. The first is the evident affinity between much that we find in Sūfism and much that is characteristic both of the Sant tradition and of the thought of Gurū Nānak. Secondly, and in evident support of the first assumption, there are Gurū Nānak's explicit rejections, or rather reinterpretations,\* of conventional Islam. The conventional Islam of his time obviously impressed Gurū Nānak as essentially a religion of external authority and external fulfilment. For Gurū Nānak dependence upon an external authority such as the *Sharī'at* and upon such exercises as the prescribed *namāz* could be meaningful only if the external authority and practice expressed a vital inner meaning. This they had manifestly, and inevitably, ceased to do and so we have Gurū Nānak's characteristic insistence upon the need to reinterpret external expressions of religion in a manner which amounted to a total denial of their validity.

*mihar masīti sidaku musalā haku halālu ku āṇu*  
*saram sunati sīlu rojā hohu musālamāṇu*  
*karaṇī kībā sachu pīrukalamā karam nivāṇ*  
*tasabī sā tisu bhāvasī nānak rakhai lāj*<sup>4</sup>

Make mercy your mosque, faith your prayer-mat, and  
 righteousness your Qur' ān.  
 Make humility your circumcision, uprightness your fasting,  
 and so you will be a (true) Mussulman.  
 Make good works your *Kā'bah*, Truth your pīr, and  
 compassion your creed and your prayer.  
 Make the performance of what pleases (God) your  
 rosary and, Nānak, he will uphold your honour.

4. *Vār Mājh*, ślok 1 of *pauri* 7, pp. 140-1. Cf. also *Siri Rāgu* 28, p. 24 : *Vār Siri Rāgu*, ślok 1 of *pauri* 4, p. 84 ; *Vār Mājh*, ślok 3 of *pauri* 7, and ślok 1 of *pauri* 8, p. 141 ; *Vār Āsā*, ślok 1 of *pauri* 6, p. 465 ; *Dhanāsari* 7, p. 662. In this and subsequent footnotes page numbers which are not otherwise identified refer to the standard printed editions of the *Ādi Granth*. It should be noted that Gurū Nānak's criticisms are directed not at Muslims as such, but at the dominant interpretation of Islam with its considerable stress upon external religion. In the works of Gurū Nānak, brahmans, yogis, and a variety of ascetics are criticised with even greater frequency for precisely the same reason.

Obviously there was no affinity with conventional Islam and any constituents which may have come directly from this source through the power of pervasive influence rather than through any conscious acceptance of its credentials.

This would appear, at first sight, to be the answer to our question concerning the source of Muslim influence in the thought of Gurū Nānak, but before accepting this answer let us examine it. This we must do as it invites misunderstanding in two respects. It implies, in the first place, a direct confrontation between Gurū Nānak and various Sūfīs. Such meetings presumably took place, but we should not assume that this was the only channel of Sūfī influence in the case of Gurū Nānak. Secondly, the answer implies a clear-cut distinction between Sūfism on the one hand and orthodox Islam on the other. This does not correspond to the condition of Islam in the Puñjāb of Gurū Nānak. We may acknowledge that Sūfism was the source which we are seeking, but let us be clear what we mean by Sūfism in this context.

The first of these potential misunderstandings can be dealt with briefly. A comparison of the works of Gurū Nānak with those of his Sant predecessors will at once reveal that a measure of the discernible Sūfī influence in his thought had already entered the thought of the Saints. The traces of Sūfī influence which appear in such concepts as the divine immanence are already to be found in the works of Gurū Nānak's Sant predecessors and were evidently mediated to him in this manner. This should not mislead us into assuming that the Sūfī influence transmitted in this manner was substantial, but it is at least arguable that the Sant works provided the principal channel along which Sūfī influences passed into the thought of Gurū Nānak.

The second of the potential misunderstandings requires lengthier treatment. Here we are concerned with the possibility of direct influence. The nature and extent of direct Sūfī influence upon Gurū Nānak can be appreciated only in the light of an understanding of contemporary Puñjābī Sūfism, the variety of Sūfī belief with which he would have come in contact. Puñjābī Sūfism of Gurū Nānak's time should not be confused with classical Sūfism. For many the



mention of Sūfism will evoke thoughts of Junaid, Hallāj, Ghazālī, and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. These were the great figure of the Sūfī movement and we quite rightly associate them with classical Sūfism. They do not, however, serve as representatives of the Puñjābī Sūfism of our period. Puñjābī Sūfism, as distinct from Arabic or Persian Sūfism, will suggest the names of Shaikh Farīd-u'd-dīn Ganj-i-Shakar,<sup>5</sup> Shāh Husain, Bulhe Shāh, Vāras, and Hāsham. Of these, all except Shaikh Farīd can be excluded from our discussion as they came later than Gurū Nānak. Shaikh Farīd should certainly be considered, but we cannot regard him as a representative of the Puñjābī Sūfism of Gurū Nānak's time, and nor can we assume that his teachings has descended unchanged. Indeed, we are not in a position to know with any assurance the full range of Shaikh Farīd's teachings<sup>6</sup> and are frequently compelled to fall back upon assumption rather than upon a trustworthy source.

This same conclusion must also apply to our understanding of the Puñjābī Sūfism which Gurū Nānak would have encountered, but the assumptions can be made with a certain cautious assurance. Much depends upon our decision concerning the Farīd *bāñī* which is recorded in the *Ādi Granth*. There appear to be only two possible interpretations of these four *śabads*<sup>7</sup> and such of the *śloke* included in the collection *Salok Sekh Farīd ke*<sup>7</sup> as cannot be ascribed to one of the Gurūs. The first possibility is that they are the work of Shaikh Ibrāhīm, the contemporary incumbent of Shaikh Farīd's *gaddī* in Pāk Paṭṭan who is sometimes referred to as Farīd the Second. The alternative explanation is that they represent the works of a number of occupants of the Pāk Paṭṭan *gaddī* as they have emerged after a period of oral circulation. Some portions may go back to the original Farīd himself, but it is impossible to assume that the purity of any such portion would have survived the period of oral transmission.

5. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-u'd-din Ganj-i-Shakar*. p. 87

6. Two *śabads* in *Rūg Āsā*, p. 488, and two in *Rūg Sūhi*, p. 794.

7. *Ādi Granth*, pp. 1377-84.

The second of these alternatives appears to be the more likely as some of the *śloks* seem to point back to the original Farīd.<sup>8</sup> In either case, however, what the *śabads* and *śloks* offer us is not an expression of Farīd's own Sūfism but illustrations of the Puñjābī Sūfism of a later period. Whereas Farīd was evidently close to the traditions of classical Sūfism the Farīd *bānī* in the *Ādi Granth* represents a marked divergence. It offers us not classical Sūfism but a variety which has been strongly influenced by Sant concepts.<sup>9</sup>

This accommodation to Sant belief signifies one development within the Sūfism of the Puñjāb prior to and during the time of Gurū Nānak.<sup>10</sup> A concurrent and much more widespread development was a movement towards orthodox Sunnī Islam, matched by a

8. This cannot be affirmed with complete assurance. The *śloks* which seem to carry us back to Farīd may be the work of successors, or may represent legends which have come to be attached to his name. For discussions of the authorship question see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, op. cit., pp. 121-2, and Lajwanti Rama Krishna, *Puñjābī Śūfī Poets*, pp. 6-7.
9. The characteristic Sūfī terminology has not completely disappeared as we do meet such expressions as *dilahu muhabati* and *isak* (*ishq*) *khudāi*, the names Allah and Sāhib, and a single example of erotic imagery (*ślok* 30). Most of the terms which we associate with Sūfī theory and practice are, however, totally absent, and with the exception of the words *daries* and *sabr* none recur with the frequency we should expect. In contrast to this lack of typical Sūfī expressions we find in these same *śabads* and *śloks* several examples of Sant terminology used in senses which accord completely with Sant doctrine. *Man* is a common word and other Sant terms are *nām*, *sach* and *sachiā*, *gurū*, and *sādh saṅgh*.  
This aspect of Puñjābī Sūfism cannot be explained by the fact that our sources for this period are in Puñjābī instead of Persian. In the first place, there are fundamental features of classical Sūfism which are covered by neither Puñjābī words nor borrowed Persian terms. Secondly, there are Sant terms which represent Sant concepts and not mere translations of corresponding Sūfī concepts. It must be stressed that we are here dealing with Puñjābī Sūfism. The movement towards Hinduism in general and Sant belief in particular was evidently more pronounced in the Puñjāb than in other parts of India. See Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, pp. 136-7.
10. Subsequent developments, particularly towards the end of the seventeenth century, carried Puñjābī Sūfism even further towards Hinduism. Lajwanti Rama Krishna, op. cit., pp. xvii-xix.

movement within orthodox Islam towards the Sūfism of the period. The dominant pattern seems to have been a considerable interchange of theory and practice between Sūfī and Sunnī Islam, and the result a popular Islam which combined characteristic features of both, though frequently in a debased form. Gurū Nānak indicates this condition in references which place the Sūfīs under the 'same condemnation as other Muslims.

*kājī sekh bhekh fakīrā  
vaḍe kahāvahi haumai tani pīrā  
kālu na chhoḍai binu satigur kī dhīrā*<sup>11</sup>

Qāzīs, shaikhs, and those who wear the faqīr's robe call themselves great, but within their bodies is the pain of *haumai*. Without the aid of the True Gurū they cannot evade death.

The leaders of the orthodox, the Sūfī mastes, and those who claimed to be followers of the Sūfī way, all are astray.<sup>12</sup>

Both of these developments are significant in the context of a discussion concerning the influence of Islam upon the thought of Gurū Nānak. The significance of the first, which relates to the more refined variety of Pañjābī Sūfism, is that insofar as this particular type of Sūfism exercised an influence upon Gurū Nānak it would tend to have been a mediated Sant influence rather than a distinctively Sūfī contribution. Its accomodation to Sant belief, together with its decline from earlier greatness, would have deprived it of much that we regard as characteristically Sūfī. The second development bears testimony to a variety of popular Sūfism which, because of its compromise with the external emphasis of conventional Islam, could not have brought any strong influence to bear upon Gurū Nānak. This does not mean, however, that it had no influence. Its pervasive quality makes it at least possible that in terms of direct influence this

11. *Gauri aṣṭ* 14 (7), p. 227.

12. Cf. also : *Sirī Rāgu aṣṭ* 17 (3), p. 64 ; *Vār Mājhi*, *ślok* 1 of *paurī* 13, p. 143 ; *Basant* 3, p. 1169 ; *Basant Hīṇḍol* 8, p. 1191. Note also *Vār Mallhār*, *paurī* 9, p. 1282, where the pīrs share in the same condemnation as Nāths, ascetics, and Siddhs.

popular Sūfism was actually a more important source than personal contacts between Gurū Nānak and representatives of the more refined variety of Sūfism.

Let us carry this question of personal contact and direct influence further and attempt to understand something of the manner in which the contact took place. In seeking to answer this aspect of our question we can work from what purports to be external evidence, from the internal evidence provided by Gurū Nānak's own works, and from reasonable assumption. The external evidence is provided by the *janam-sākhīs* and must, I believe, be largely rejected as unreliable. We have, for example, the *janam-sākhī* record of a period of instruction from a *mullāh* during Gurū Nānak's childhood.<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that we can safely accept such a period as a proven event, for the *janam-sākhīs* do not possess the necessary authority, particularly as far as the Gurū's childhood is concerned. The same must be said concerning the *janam-sākhī* records of Gurū Nānak's travels. The one point at which the *janam-sākhīs* do appear to record an acceptable instance of contact with a Sūfī is in their accounts of Gurū Nānak's meeting with Shaikh Ibrāhīm.<sup>14</sup> In this case, however, the meeting must have taken place after the substance of Gurū Nānak's thought had been definitively formulated. Moreover, the *janam-sākhīs* probably offer an essentially correct interpretation of the contact when they project it as a case of Gurū Nānak giving rather than taking.

The *janam sākhīs* provide us with little reliable assistance and we must accordingly turn to the internal evidence. The evidence offered by Gurū Nānak's own work is open to a variety of interpretations, and what follows is tentative rather than assured. We may begin by affirming that Gurū Nānak's works testify to the fact that he certainly knew the terminology of the Sūfīs. The following *śloka* makes this clear :

13. *Miharbān JS*, goṣṭ 6 ; *Purātan JS*, sākhī 3 ; *Gyān-ratanāvalī*, sākhī 45. The location in the *Bālā* tradition varies with the different versions.

14. *Miharbān JS*, goṣṭs 147-49 ; *Purātan JS*, sākhī 32 ; *Gyān ratanāvalī*, sākhīs 36-37.

*hukamī rajāī sākhatī daragah sachu kabūlu  
 sāhibu lekhā maṅgasī duniā dekhi na bhūlu  
 dil daravānī jo kare daravesī dilu rāsi  
 isak muhabatī nānakā lekhā karate fāsi*<sup>15</sup>

We must, however, add that this *ślok* is an isolated exception to the general pattern of Gurū Nānak's style. There appears to be little doubt that it represents a direct address to a Sūfī audience, but the fact that it is an exception suggests that his direct contacts with the kind of Sūfīs who would use this language cannot have been frequent. It may be argued that the general absence of such expressions is a result not of infrequent contacts but of a conviction on Gurū Nānak's part that this kind of Sūfī was already on the right path and in need of little assistance. This is difficult to accept, for had his direct contacts with them been both frequent and friendly we should surely have found more evidence of Sūfī influence, both in terms of their beliefs and of the small portion of traditional terminology which had been carried over into Pañjābī. If, on the other hand, his contacts had been frequent and unfriendly we should have expected several *śabads* and *śloks* of a manifestly dialectic character directed against the Sūfīs. We have compositions of this kind which are obviously directed against Nāthi yogīs, but only occasional references aimed at the Sūfīs.

The evidence of Gurū Nānak's own works seems to indicate not a regular direct contact with members of Sūfī orders, but rather the kind of informal contact with ordinary Muslims which would have been inevitable in his circumstances. Amongst those Muslims there would certainly be some strict Sunnis and we can assume that there would also be a number who might fitly be described as Sūfīs. The majority would, however, represent in varying degrees the dominant blend of modified orthodoxy and debased Sūfism. Contacts of this kind would explain the expressions in Gurū Nānak's works which sound like echoes of the Qur'ān, they would explain the grouping of Sūfī and Sunnī in his criticisms of external religion, and they would explain the paucity of references which point to direct Sūfī influence.

15. *Vār Mūrū*, *ślok* 1 of *paurī* 12, p. 1090.

The answer to our first question, the question concerning the sources of Muslim influence, can now be given in summary form. The source of this influence was Sūfism, but the influence was communicated in two ways and it was communicated by differing varieties of Sūfism. The primary influence appears to have been indirect. Sūfism had already exercised a limited influence upon Sant belief and such influence was subsequently mediated to Gurū Nānak as a part of the Sant synthesis. The secondary influence was communicated by means of direct contact. In some small measure this direct influence may have come through contact with exponents of a relatively refined Sūfism, but the principal source of direct influence appears to have been the popular variety which had blended with orthodox Islam and was to some considerable extent indistinguishable from it.

We turn now to our second question. What distinctively Muslim elements can be distinguished in the thought of Gurū Nānak, and what other evidence is there of Muslim influence? At first sight these elements appear to be numerous and the influence to be strong, for we find in his works many features which have obvious affinities with Sūfī concepts. There is an emphasis upon the unity of God, a revolution in creation, the paradox of God transcendent as well as immanent, an expression of God in terms of light, a perverse human organ<sup>16</sup> which requires purification, a doctrine of grace, an emphasis upon the suffering involved in separation from the Beloved, a concept of *nām simaran* which appears to combine elements of both the *dhikr* and *murāqabat* of the Sūfīs, an ascent to union through a number of stages, a purging of self and ultimate union which, although they are nowhere explicitly defined, do not appear to be inconsistent with the Sufi notions of *fanā'* and *baqā'*. He also shares with many Sūfīs a belief in the needlessness of asceticism on the one hand, and upon the snare of worldly wealth on the other. To these evident parallels with Sūfī belief and expression we should also add the references which appear to be obvious echoes of the Qur'ān.<sup>17</sup>

16. Gurū Nānak's *man* and the *dil-rūh-sirr* complex of the Sūfīs.

17. Cf. *Japji* 2, p. 1.

This is an impressive list and one which seems to suggest that Sūfism must certainly have exercised a considerable influence in the formation of Gurū Nānak's beliefs. Before we draw this conclusion, however, we must consider a number of features which point in the opposite direction. In the first place there is the conspicuous lack of Sūfī terminology in the works of Gurū Nānak. Characteristic Sūfī terms such as *dhikr*, *khauf*, *tawakkul*, *yaqīn*, *murāqaba*, *irāda*, *ma'rifat*, *talib*, and *tauba* are either rare or totally absent. Even when such words make an occasional appearance they are not generally used in a sense implying the precise meaning which they would possess in Sūfī usage<sup>18</sup> and in some cases they are introduced with the patent intention of providing a reinterpretation of their meaning.<sup>19</sup> In contrast with this relative absence of Sūfī terms we find a wealth of Sant terminology and imagery derived from Hindu sources. Almost all of his basic terminology is of native Indian derivation. In choosing names of God his preference is strongly for Hindu names, and when dealing with a concept which has obvious affinities with Sūfī belief he will almost always use a non-Sūfī term.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, we must observe that although there are certainly strong resemblances to Sūfī thought, almost all of the evident affinities can, with equal cogency, be traced back to native Indian sources. This is not to affirm that we must in all cases seek an Indian source; merely that an apparent affinity need not necessarily point to a Sūfī source. Moreover, we must bear in mind the complex interchange of influences which had affected Sūfism, particularly the Sūfism of India. Notions which at first sight might appear to be traceable to Sūfī sources may in some cases have pedigrees which carry them back through Sūfism to an earlier Indian source.<sup>21</sup>

18. *Dil* is the most common example.

19. Eg. *faqīr* and *darves*. The description of Gurū Nānak himself as a 'faqīr' is to be ascribed to the *janam-sākhis* and oral traditions, not to his own works. In the *janam-sākhis* and oral tradition it is, of course, used in its popular sense as a synonym for *sādhu* or *sant*, not in its strict Sūfī sense.

20. *Sat* or *such*, *haqiqat*; *joti*, not *nūr*; *man*, not *sirr*; *laumai*, not *nafs*; *bhāu*, *piār*, or *prem*, not *ishq*.

21. S. M. Ikram (ed. Ainslie T. Embree), *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 123.

An illustration of this point is provided by the figure of the bride awaiting the divine spouse, a conventional image which expresses the soul's yearning for God and which symbolises the mystical union crowning the soul's ascent to God. Gurū Nānak inherited the image from the Sant tradition and used it frequently in his works.<sup>22</sup> This same figure is to be found in Sūfī compositions. In classical Persian Sūfism the devotee is generally cast in the male role, but Indian Sūfism had reversed the roles and as a result we find a Sūfī usage in striking consonance with Sant usage.<sup>23</sup> This does not, however, mean that the Sants received the image from the Sūfīs. The figure has a lengthy history in native Indian tradition and there seems to be little doubt that it was from this source that the Sant tradition received it. Sūfī usage may well have provided some encouragement, but in doing so it would have been mediating, in some measure at least, the native Indian original. The fact that Indian Sūfism had reversed the roles of male and female strongly suggests a response to its environment.

A third reason for exercising caution in our comparisons with Sūfī belief is the fact that in some fundamental respects Gurū Nānak's thought is in direct conflict with that of the Sūfīs. The obvious example of this is his acceptance of the doctrines of *karma* and transmigration.<sup>24</sup> We should also observe his denial of the need for esoteric perception,<sup>25</sup> the contrast between the human preceptors of the Sūfī orders (*shaikh*, *pīr*, or *murshid*) and Gurū Nānak's understanding of an

22. Cf. *Āsā* 10, 14, 26, 27 and 35, pp. 351-9 *passim*; *Sūhi Chhant* 1, 2, 3, 4, pp. 763-6. For examples of usage by earlier Sants see Kabir, *Gauri* 23, 50, and 65, pp. 328, 333-4, 337-8; *Āsā* 24 and 30, pp. 482, 483; *Sūhi* 2, p. 792, Nāmdev, *Bhairau* 4, p. 1164. Ravidās, *Sūhi* 1, p. 793. See also *Kabir-granthāvalī* (*dohā*), *āṅg* 3, 11, 36, and 52.

23. Sant usage of this connubial imagery generally lacks the frankly erotic expression which may be found in some Sūfī works.

24. These doctrines eventually penetrated Pañjābi Sufism (Lajwanti, Rama Krishna, *op.cit.*, p. xviii), but there is no evidence to suggest that they had done so by the time of Gurū Nānak.

25. Cf. *Dhanāsari*, pp. 13, 663 :

*sabh mahi joti joti hai soi*  
*tis dai chānaṇi sabh mahi chānaṇu hoi*



inner voice of God (the *gurū*), and the differing roles ascribed to the operation of divine grace.

Fourthly, we should note once again the evidence which Gurū Nānak himself offers of his own opinion concerning the leaders of the Sūfī orders. As we have already seen, the shaikhs and pīrs suffer the same condemnation as the qāzīs and mullāhs.<sup>26</sup>

These four considerations must restrain us from any hasty acceptance of significant Sūfī influence, although in themselves they do not necessarily rule it out. There remains the possibility that such influence has been communicated through Sant channels after having been assimilated to the total Sant pattern and to the terminology of the Sants. There also remains the possibility that although distinctively Muslim terms are relatively uncommon some of them may nevertheless express borrowings of fundamental importance.

To test these possibilities we shall consider the more important points which are offered as instances of Muslim influence. The first such instance is the claim that Gurū Nānak's monotheism represents a debt to Islam.<sup>27</sup> In this respect we can certainly acknowledge the likelihood of strong encouragement from Islam, but it is surely going too far to identify Islam as the actual source.<sup>28</sup> Theism extends far back in the religious history of India and the monotheistic strain is already evident within Hindu *bhakts* before the weight of Muslim influence came upon it. The antecedents of the Sant movement are to be found primarily in the bhakti tradition and this would seem to be the true source of its monotheism. Sant antecedents also include the Nāth tradition and Nāth emphasis upon unity would presumably have strengthened the bhakti inheritance at this point. Islamic insistence upon the Divine Unity can certainly be accepted as another strengthening influence, but not as the actual source.

26. Cf. also Gurū Arjan's *Mārū Solahū* 12, pp 1083-4.

27. "Its [Sikhism's] basic conviction—monotheism—is drawn from Mohammedanism." John B. Noss, *op.cit.* p. 272.

28. Aziz Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p. 142

A second obvious possibility would appear to be Gurū Nānak's doctrine of the *hukam*. Here we have an Arabic word expressing a concept which seems to reflect a distinctively Muslim doctrine. The actual word must obviously be accepted as a borrowing from the terminology of Islam, but not the doctrine which it expresses. Translators of the works of Gurū Nānak have encouraged misunderstanding at this point by rendering *hukam* as 'Will' and so implying, whether intentionally or not, that we have here a concept modelled on the Islamic doctrine of the Will of God. The *hukam* of Gurū Nānak is best translated as 'divine order' and may be defined as the divinely instituted and maintained principle governing the existence and movement of the universe. It is a constant principle, and to the extent to which it can be comprehended it functions according to a predictable pattern. This pattern of regularity and consistency distinguishes it from the Islamic concept.<sup>29</sup> In Islam the divine Will, if not actually capricious is at least 'unpledged', whereas the *hukam* of Gurū Nānak's usage is definitely pledged and dependable. The word has obviously come from Islamic sources, but not the basic doctrine which it covers.<sup>30</sup> As in the case of our first instance the most we can allow at this point is a measure of encouragement.

Other instances can be dealt with summarily. We may observe without comment that Gurū Nānak's doctrine of *nām simaran* does not correspond to the Sufi technique of *dhikr*, and that the five *khaṇḍs*, or "realms", of *Jaṭṭi*<sup>31</sup> do not correspond even remotely to the *maqāmat* of the Sūfīs.<sup>32</sup> A distinct resemblance can be perceived

29. It is significant that the law of *karma* is regarded as an expression of the *hukam*. The concept of the *hukam* provides a clear illustration of the manner in which Gurū Nānak's thought transcended that of his predecessors. The term is to be found in the works of Kabir, and in a sense which points towards Gurū Nānak's meaning (Cf. Kabir *Mārū* 4, pp. 1103-4.) It is, however, only in the works of Gurū Nānak that we find the developed doctrine occupying a position of fundamental importance.

30. If we are to seek an Islamic parallel to Gurū Nānak's doctrine of the *hukam* the closest would probably be the notion of "the Reality of Muhammad" (*al-Haqīqat al-Muhammadiya*) or "the Reality of Realities" (*Haqīqat al-haqū'iq*). A. J. Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 100.

31. *Jaṭṭi* 34-37, pp 7-8.

32. A much closer resemblance is to be found in the stages enunciated in the *Yoga-vasīṣṭha*. See S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. ii, p. 264.

between Gurū Nānak's descriptions of the actual climax of the spiritual ascent and the Sūfī concepts of *fanā'* and *baqā'*, but the comparison is difficult to draw as the descriptions concern what both Gurū Nānak and the Sūfīs would regard as indescribable. The terms used by Gurū Nānak to express this condition are Hindu<sup>33</sup> and we do not find in his works the characteristic Sūfī emphasis upon visible ecstasy.

This process will eliminate much that has been regarded as evidence of Muslim influence, but we should not press it to the point of denying all such influence. Occasionally one encounters in the works of Gurū Nānak an expression or an image which clearly seems to have been borrowed from Muslim sources. An example of this is provided by the 'veil' which conceals the Truth from man's perception.<sup>34</sup> A more important, though much less direct instance of Muslim influence may possibly be the weight attached to the equality of all men in matters religious. If we allow the egalitarian emphasis of Islam as a significant influence upon the bhakti movement we may perhaps allow it as a mediated influence in the case of Gurū Nānak, although it is difficult to imagine his having omitted this teaching under any circumstances.

Almost immediately we seem to be moving away from the obvious to the merely possible, and to the 'merely possible' we may add an issue which concerns Gurū Nānak's doctrine of God. In his works we find a strong emphasis upon the absolute sovereignty of God, and statements to the effect that if God chooses to withhold His gracious glance from a particular person there can be no hope of salvation for that person. These statements may amount to no more than a natural corollary of Gūru Nānak's concept of divine

33. *Sahaj*, *param pad*, *chauthā pad*, *turiā pad*, and *amar pad*. His usage of the Nāth term *dasam duār* also relates to this condition. Note also the term *sach khaṇḍ*.

34. *Japji* 1, p. 1. Gurū Nānak's application is, however, distinctively his own, for he endues the 'veil' with the meaning of *haumai*. (Vir Singh, *Santhyā Sri Gurū Granth Sāhib*, vol. i, p. 48.) We should also note that the popular Sūfī metaphor of intoxication is not common in Gurū Nānak's works, although the apocryphal saying *nām khumārī nānakā chārī rahe dīn rāt* has enjoyed wide circulation.

grace, but it seems reasonable to assume that the measure of stress which he lays upon this negative corollary may be a result of Sūfī influence. Elsewhere in his works we find the emphasis laid upon the positive corollary, namely that God in His grace chooses to impart enlightenment to men who would otherwise fail to perceive the divine self-revelation in the created world around them and in their own inward experience. This accords much more naturally with his total theology than does the negative corollary. The most likely explanation for the latter appears to be that the weight of Muslim emphasis upon the absolute nature of the divine authority has led to the engrafting into Gurū Nānak's theology of a distinctively Muslim expression of that divine authority.

Beyond this it is impossible to proceed with firm assurance. It seems intrinsically probable that the Sūfīs must have at least encouraged latent tendencies, but it is not possible to identify these with complete certainty. Gūru Nānak's doctrine of the unity of God we have already acknowledged as a strong candidate in this respect, and it seems safe to grant the same recognition in the case of the characteristic Sant emphasis upon the divine immanence, a feature of basic importance in the thought of Gurū Nānak. Another example may perhaps be his stress upon the formless quality of God (*nirāṅkā*r).

The conclusion to which our examination<sup>•</sup> points is that Sūfī influence evidently operated upon the thought of Gurū Nānak, but that in no case can we accord this influence a fundamental significance. Sūfī and Qur'ānic imagery have certainly made their impress, and there must have been encouragement of tendencies which accorded with Sūfī teaching, but no fundamental components can be traced with assurance to an Islamic source. Gurū Nānak's principal inheritance from the religious background of his period was unquestionably that of the Sant tradition and evidence of other independent influences is relatively slight. We must indeed acknowledge that the antecedents of Sant belief are by no means wholly clear and that within the area of obscurity there may be important features which derived primarily from Sūfī sources. The complexity of the subject leaves appreciable room for doubt and we are accordingly bound to own that at least

some of our conclusions must be regarded as tentative, not as definitively established. It appears, however, that Sant belief owes none of its basic constituents to the Sūfīs. For Sant belief the major source is to be found in the bhakti movement, with Nāth theory entering as a significant secondary source.

Let me conclude by repudiating an impression which may have been suggested by my treatment of this subject. Let me state categorically that I do not deny the originality of Gurū Nānak's thought. This misunderstanding is liable to occur in any discussion which relates to antecedents and influences, and I am concerned that it should not arise from this paper. The fact that a man works with elements which have been provided by others should not necessarily suggest that the product of his labours is not peculiarly his own. Others will supply the threads, but the pattern which he weaves with them may be a design of singular originality. In the case of Gurū Nānak this was certainly the result. We may trace the threads to a variety of sources ; the ultimate pattern remains uniquely his own.

gold's name is its uncreated name (*akṛtrima nāma*). The forms (*rūpa*) that are transient like a ring, bangle etc, are, therefore, only formal names (*kṛtrima nāma*) which not being eternal are phenomenal. It is for this reason that gurus made reference to both kinds of names. Says Guru Arjun Dev :

“Through speech have I repeated  
your formal names (*kṛtrim nāma*)  
But your original (*nāma*) is ‘*sati-nāmu*’ ”<sup>28</sup>

and Guru Gobind Singh says :

“The wise express (God) through formal  
names (*kaṛam nāma*)”<sup>29</sup>

It is the transient that is seen negated though only in reference to the eternal noumena. Therefore, all that is transient, even God the doer (*karta*), God's avtaras, gods (*devtas*) etc., and all the universe and its many religions that are engulfed within time (*kāla*), space (*vesha*) and causation (*karma*) are phenomenal predicates of the real, the eternal, and are, therefore, unreal (*mithya*). The substantial cause itself not being subject to time, space and causation is eternal. Thus it is the only reality, as Guru Gobind Singh says<sup>30</sup> :

“Some worship Brahman, and some worship Mahesha ;  
Some say Vishnu is the lord of the universe,  
By whose worship all misery and unhappiness  
is removed  
Think a thousand time, o ignorant !  
In the end all will desert thee.  
Realise that as testimony, which was,  
is, and will be.”

In this manner Shri Krishna in *Gītā* referring to his formal name, says<sup>31</sup> :

28. *Guru Granth, Guru Arjan* : Maru Solahe : 11 2. 20. p. 1083.

29. *Dasam Granth, Japa*, 1 1.

30. *Dasam Granth*, 33 Sawye : 15 & 16 thus being the formal and final causes and all collocation.

31. *Gītā* : 7124.

“The fools reckon me as form, being formless,  
They do not see the purpose (of my avtar’s  
and their names)  
I am eternal, the most exalted.”

and in the same strain Guru Gobind Singh says<sup>32</sup> :

“Whoever refers to me (form) as God (formless)  
he will fall into the deep basin of hell.”

All this meets the opening lines of the *Guru Granth*<sup>33</sup> :

“Originally real ; in the beginning real ;  
Now real ; O Nanak ! will ever be real.”

#### THE GURU'S PHILOSOPHY

The above canon may be explained allegorically thus : originally an ornament of gold, in the beginning of its making it was gold, now as an ornament it is gold and on the dissolution of the ornament's form when it has no name as such, it would still be nothing other than gold. It is for this reason that Guru Arjan says :

“On the dissolving of an ornament it is  
referred to only as gold.”<sup>34</sup>

In this manner the gurus clearly state that there is nothing but God, thus making Him the universe's substantial, efficient, energetic, formal and final cause. Therefore, only when the unity underlying the diversity is realised, there is the intuition of the noumenal, the eternal reality, behind the phenomenal.<sup>35</sup>

All diversity that is cognizable as the phenomena thus must be within this only, one ! It is, therefore, now clear that the Guru

32. *Dasam Granth*, Vichitra Natak, 6. 32.

33. *Guru Granth*, Japu : 1. p. 1.

34. *Guru Arjan*, Dhanasri. 5. 3. p. 672.

35. *Guru Granth*, *Guru Arjan* ; Maru Solahe : 11. 2. p. 1082-1085.

envisions the only one ; the phenomenal many being like a mirage. Therefore, by definition 1 = 'Aek' implies *advaita* is all, being formless transcendental reality (*niraṅkar*) of which the phenomenal predicates (*guṇa*) are : *sattava*, *raja* and *tamas*.<sup>36</sup> Guru Arjan says.<sup>37</sup>

"Self (God) being formless is formfull,  
One is with and without constituents (*guṇas*)  
Only One being deliberated  
Nanak ! One is the many."

Guru Arjan says :

"Say Nanak ! The Guru (Master) removeth delusion ;  
Only Allah is *Parbrahma*."<sup>38</sup>

All religions and their scriptures cover all phases of humanity. Thus it deals with all phases of men's temporal and spiritual living, constructing a steady graduation according to human intellect which may be brought under the four headings in the three theoretical stages within the scriptures. This is referred to by Shri Krishna in a dialogue with Uddhava in the *Bhāgvat Purāna* thus :

"There are only three yogas that I have mentioned  
For the benevolence of man :  
*Karam* (gross action by the body) *Bhagti*  
(subtle action through devotion done by the mind)  
and *Jñāna* (intellectual knowledge through  
metaphysics),  
There is no other method what-so-ever."<sup>39</sup>

These stages are referred to by the gurus in the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the Hindu and Sufi names as : 1. *karma yoga* : *shariyat* (ritualism) ; 2. *bhagti yoga* : *tariquat* (devotionalism) ; 3. *paroksha jñana yoga* : *marfat* (theoretical knowledge) and its realisation is the last

36. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan, Maru Solhe : 10, 1, 13. p 1082.

37. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan, Bavana Akhari, 2, 1, p. 250 ; also see *Dasam Granth*, 3 Sawaye : 15.

38. *Guru Granth* : Guru Arjan, Ramkali, 45 34 5. p 897.

39. *Bhagvat Purana*, 1, 20, 6.



stage beyond the scope of any book's theoretical knowledge and is known as *aproksha jñāna haqiqut* (realisation).<sup>40</sup> This stage is referred to by Guru Arjan in this way: 'Beyond the Veda and Kitabs: Nanak's Lord is evidently realised.'<sup>41</sup> It is for this reason, realisation which comes from the scriptures is beyond their arena. Guru Arjan says :

"By merely reading the Veda, Kitab and Smritis, and all the scriptures : liberation is not attained'  
Only upon realisation of One Eternal One,  
One is competent to become pure."<sup>42</sup>

and for this reason Bhai Gurdas says :

"By saying sugar one's mouth is not sweetened  
and by saying fire cold is not dispelled."  
But realisation cannot come without a study of the *Jñāna Yoga*.<sup>43</sup>

It is for this reason that Bhagat Kabir says :

"The Turak (Muslim) knows the Tarkat (way-method)  
The Hindu, the Veda and Purānas (literally).  
For mind's realisation, study mataphysics (*Jñāna*).<sup>44</sup>

According to Guru Nanak, the definition of *Sikhi* (Sikhism) is : "Sikhi is pondering over the Guru's Teachings."<sup>45</sup> Then the natural question arises : what is the ultimate teaching of the Guru. To this, Guru Teg Bahadur says :

"Realise the One outside and within thee,  
This is the knowledge the Guru bestows.  
But without self (*ātman*) investigation ;  
The veil of delusion is not removed."<sup>46</sup>

40. *Guru Granth*, Maru Solahe : 12.3.3. p. 1083.

41. *Ibid.*, Asa, 105. 3.4. p. 397.

42. *Guru Granth*, Suhi, 50.3.3 p. 747

43. Bhai Gurdas, Chanda, 437 etc

44. *Guru Granth*, Bhagat Kabir, Bavan Akhari, 21. p. 250.

45. *Ibid.*, Guru Nanak : Asadi Var : 5.2. p. 465.

46. *Ibid.*, Guru Teg Bahadur ; Dhanasri : 1.2. p. 684.

To remove the veil of delusion is the ultimate object, whereby realisation may come to a student of philosophy. The vedic *darshanas* have postulated three categories :<sup>47</sup>

1. Ārambha Vāda<sup>47</sup> the theory of atomic agglomeration, accepted by Purava Mimamsa, Nyaya and Vaisheshika.
2. Pariṇāma Vāda :<sup>48</sup> The theory of unfolding (evolution) and five *tattvas*, accepted in a way also by Vaisheshika.
3. Vivarta Vāda.<sup>49</sup> the theory of illusion accepted in a way by all the six, but mainly by Vedanta which further categorises delusion simultaneously with five forms of illusion (*bhrama*) viz.,
  - (i) *Bheda Bhrama* (illusion of cleavage) which is like an image reflected in a mirror.<sup>50</sup>
  - (ii) *Kṛtvā Bhrama* (illusion of creativity) like a metal in fire seeming to be fire itself.<sup>51</sup>
  - (iii) *Samga Bhrama* : (illusion by contact) like an earthen pot and ether, thus it tends to split ether.<sup>52</sup>
  - (iv) *Vikara Bhrama* (illusion of change) like sand seen as mirage<sup>53</sup> or rope seen as a serpent,<sup>54</sup> or a seed as a tree<sup>55</sup> etc.
  - (v) *Satya Bhrama* : (illusion of truth) like gold and an ornament seeming to be two.<sup>56</sup>

47. Ibid., Guru, Suhi ; 2. p. 1364 ; Gauri : 3. p. 340 and *Dasam Granth*, Shabd Hazare, 31. 8. 2

48. Ibid., Guru Ram Das, Suhi, 24. 15. 4. 3. p. 736 etc.

49. Ibid., Guru Arjan Dev : Sanskriti Saloka, 30, p. 1356 etc.

50. Ibid., Guru Teg Bahadur : Sortha : 53. p. 632, etc.

51. Ibid., Guru Amar Das ; Asa Chanta : 7.2 5.7.2. p. 441.

52. Ibid., Bhagat Ravi Das ; Sortha : 1. p. 657. 658.

53. Ibid., Guru Arjan ; Sortha : 22.1.2. p. 615.

54. Ibid., Bhagat Ravi Das ; Sortha : 1.3. p. 658.

55. Ibid., Guru Arjan, Suhi : 1.2. p. 736 and Gauri Kabir ; 3. p. 340.

56. Ibid., Guru Arjan, Suhi ; 1.2. p. 736 and Bhagat Ravi Das, Sortha ; 1.3 p. 658 etc.

Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh emphatically state that when delusion is removed the realisation of the one comes. Says Guru Arjan :

“Due to delusion there is greed,  
attachment and  
Transformation ‘Maya’ :  
Delusion removed, then ‘I’  
*Ekamkara* (Monism is attained),”<sup>57</sup>

#### PHILOSOPHY OF CONVICTION (NISHTHĀ)

According to Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh the object of all philosophies is the realisation of the One. Says Guru Arjan :

“Proclaim all the Veda and Shastras ;  
Not to proclaim another  
Originally, in the beginning,  
now and ever to be ;  
O Nanak ! there is only One.”

The One therefore, is the same for the Hindu and the Muslim. We may repeat Guru Arjan :

“Says Nanak ! The Guru removeth delusion :  
Only (I) Allah is *Parbrahm*.”<sup>58</sup>

and Guru Gobind Singh Says :

“From whosoever’s mind delusion is removed ;  
Before him ; who is Hindu, or who is Turak.”<sup>59</sup>

But though confluence came about nearly five hundred years ago, it is still not evident to all. It is, therefore, not attainable without thorough knowledge within tradition, for Guru Amar Das says :

57. Ibid., Guru Arjan, Suhi : 1.3, p 736.

58. Guru Arjan, Gauri Bavan Akhari. 20, 1. p. 254

59. *Dasam Granth*, 24 Avtaras I. 19.

## MRIGENDRA SINGH

“The name exists secretly in Kali Yuga ;  
Hari remains Omniperfect in all His parts.  
The Jewel as the Name, appears only in those hearts ;  
Who run for protection to the Guru.”<sup>60</sup>

Says the Gītā :

“Out of a thousand is a rare that makes an effort  
Again out of those thousands a rare attempts to proceed  
Again out of those thousands a rare reaches the object  
Rare is the one who sees Me (The Ultimate Reality)”<sup>61</sup>

In this way the Guru gave a universal eternal message for humanity in general that man should not be bound by the fetters of any religion. When the yogis wanted to bring Guru Nanak into their religious creed he showed his contribution by synthesising his philosophy with yoga relegating theirs to the secondary place. The Sufi pīrs of Multan although accepting Guru Nanak as a Sufi did not want him to settle down in that town. They allegorically paid homage by a bowl filled to the brim with milk,<sup>62</sup> thus indicating that the town was already full of saints. In reply Guru Nanak put a crystal of sugar into the milk and placed a Jasmine flower upon it, thus indicating, firstly, that he would merge in them like sugar in milk and also he would remain aloof like the flower. Secondly, as sugar sweetens milk he would sweeten their insipid philosophy. Thirdly, as a flower attracts bees his philosophy would be the focus and cause of all attraction. In this way Guru Nanak showed that he belonged to no particular form of religion, and Guru Arjan confirms this in the these words :<sup>63</sup> •

“Neither am I Hindu nor Musalman  
This body and spirit is of Allāh-Rāma.

This is synonymous with Rumi's views even though the world considers Rumi a Muslim Sufi. He says :<sup>64</sup>

“What is to be done, O Musalmans ?  
For I do not recognise myself.

60. *Guru Granth*, Guru Amar Das ; Parbhat : 4.2. p. 1334.

61. *Gītā*, 7.3.

62. *Ibid* , Var, 1-41.

63. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan ; Bhairo : 3.4. p. 1136.

64. *Life and Work of Rumi*, Afzal Iqbal, p. 120.

I am neither Christian, nor Jew,  
Nor Gabr, Nor Musalman."

The traditional philosophical schools of Indian philosophies and the *Sanyasis* of Shamkar's school considered the Guru's philosophy as the same Monism as theirs, considering him also to be a saint (*Sanyasi*). Referring to this episode Guru Ram Das says :<sup>65</sup>

"All the Yogis, Digambar and Sanyasis that are, and  
The Khata-Dharshana (six philosophical schools)  
Deliberated and went, taking abode."

Thus they all accepted the supremacy of Guru Amar Das and paid homage and took refuge in him. The Guru differentiated his monistic philosophy as mentioned earlier with reference to the two eternal traditions of the ascetic and active schools; their being of ascetic *sanyasa yoga* and his own being of active *raja yoga*.<sup>66</sup> Likewise in the time of Guru Arjan when the Vaishnavas who all partook of dualism, and were saturated with devotion (*bhagti*) considered that the Guru's philosophy was of the Vaishnava order, then Guru Arjan said :<sup>67</sup>

"The Smriti, scriptures, Veda and Purānas ;  
Deliberate upon Parbraham,  
The Yogis, Yatis, Vaishnavas and Ramdas,  
Have no knowledge of eternal Brahm."

By Guru Arjan's request the foundation stone of the Hari Mandir (Golden Temple) Amritsar was laid by the Sufi saint Mian Mir, creating a Hindu-Musalman confluence in the temporal living of the people. It is in this very spirit that Guru Gobind Singh gives his universal message to man from China to France, the then known world. There is an emphatic mention of each country, nation and tribe in the verses of *Akal Ustat* from 254 to 266, further referring to the unity of two basic religions of that age in this manner :<sup>68</sup>

65. *Guru Granth*, Guru Ram Das, Tukhari : 10.4.3. p. 1116.

66. *Ibid.*, 3. 3 ; also foot note 16 & 17.

67. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan ; Gonda : 17.15.2, p. 867.

68. *Dasam Granth*, Akal Ustat, 86. This is synonymous to Guru Arjan Dev ; Bhairon p. 1136.

“Allāh and Abhekh (ungarbed God) are the same ;  
 Purān and Qurān are the same,  
 Being one material cause, to make all.....”

It is for this reason that Guru Gobind Singh has at the end of ‘Ram Avtar’ emphatically expressed unity of Hindu and Islamic philosophies in these words :“<sup>9</sup>

“Ever since I took refuge at thy feet,  
 Since then my eyes (spiritual) see no other ;  
 Ram, Rahim, Purān, Qurān. are believed to be many,  
 Not (*mata*) comprehended as One  
 (In the ultimate object),  
 The Smriti, Shastras and all the Vedas  
 (By the dualistic)  
 Are said to be diverse,  
 I (*hama*) know them as One (*ekana*)  
 O ! Exalted holder of the sword in hand,  
 By thy grace, I have not spoken,  
 all is deliberated by thee.”

Here Guru Gobind Singh indicates the highest realisation of monistic philosophy by merging himself with the only God, removing his ego (*haumain*) ; Hence this quotation becomes a revelation of God.

#### WHO IS A SIKH

The definition of a Sikh is stated earlier. But the question is : Is not Sikhism a religion today ? The answer is, true, it is, but only for the unacquainted it has form, but still not like the other religions. It actually has three forms within itself. This may be explained as such. As the general public of India by nationality are Indians, so all the believers of the teachings of the gurus may be considered as Sikhs. Secondly, as the intellectuals like the rulers, judges, lawyers are also Indians, likewise the ‘Nirmala’ order of the Sikhs created by Guru Gobind Singh to be missionaries, religious teachers, guides etc. for all the Sikhs, constitutes sikhism. Lastly as an army with its uniform and laws of discipline are also essential to defend the State and are also Indians, so was the ‘Khalsa Singh’

formed as the army with its uniform and laws of the Sikhs for the defence of universal *Dharma*. This Khalsa was not created in any hostility to Islam, but only in defence against the barbaric hostility in the garb of Islam by Aurangzeb. As Guru Gobind Singh in his 'letter of victory' to Aurangzeb says :<sup>70</sup>

“You (Aurangzeb) have not scruples,  
No faith in religion.  
Not reckoning the Lord (God),  
Not having faith in Muhammad.”

Guru Gobind Singh had over 500 Muslim soldiers given to him by Sufi Saint Buddha Shah of Sadhaura. The saint also sent his four sons who fought and died for the sake of the Guru's universal *dharma*, though they were known as muslim sufis. Thus Guru Gobind Singh within the tradition of Guru Nanak's confluence of Hinduism and Islam perpetuated this tradition in the form of his Nirmala missionaries and Khalsa army. But that does not mean that only a Nirmala or only a Khalsa is a Sikh. It is said, in the *Mahabharat* :<sup>71</sup>

Dharma that condemns a Dharma, but narrow Dharma,  
That Dharma which removes contradictors, is Dharma.

It, therefore, may be clear that whenever there is mass production of philosophy it becomes dogmatic and ritualistic due to the sway of the ignorant masses. Hence degeneration creeps in. This is true about Sikhism as shown by the general masses today. But nevertheless it becomes the duty of all literate men firstly to try to understand the Guru's philosophy and then further to educate the masses.

For it is mentioned in the *Aitreya-Maitrayi Samveda*, that the sage enquired : 'Will it be that there will be no book in Kali Yuga or no scholars or no saints, that it will be such a declined age?' Upon this, Maitaraiya replied ;

70. *Zafar Namah*, 1.46 to 49.

71. *Mahabharata Vana Parva*, 131. 11.

“There will be libraries in each home,  
 There will be scholars in each institution,  
 There will be saints in every forest,  
 But rare will be a Brahman Jñāna (realised) In Kali Yuga.”

### FUTURE

It is true, Guru Nanak says :

“Rare is none who ponders over revelation (*Vaṇi*).”<sup>72</sup>

But there is one thing Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh have done by the *Ādi* and *Dasam Granths*. They have given a universal message without forming a sectarian philosophy, and it is for this very reason that Guru Gobind Singh ultimately gave his guruship to the Guru Granth, first himself paying his respects and homage in tradition and then for all to follow suit, thus accepting it as his own philosophy and the final word. He gave secondary place to his own compositions or to the laws for the Nirmala or Khālsā Sikhs.<sup>73</sup> Thus he indicated continuation of the spirit of all formal religions and established that universal way of temporal and spiritual life which was rejuvenated a number of times. But Sikhism has no formal form so that it may live till eternity without form and name as only one for the benevolence of all humanity. Hence a confluence can only occur in an active monism. Guru Arjan says<sup>74</sup> :

“The egg of delusion has burst ;  
 The mind is (now) illuminated.  
 Cutting the fetters off the feet ;  
 The Guru frees the captive.”

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72. *Rahat Namas* of Guru Gobind Singh.

73. *Guru Granth*, Guru Arjan, Maru : 14.5.1. p. 1002.

74. *Ibid.*, Guru Arjan, Maru : 14.5.1. p. 1002.



# SIKHISM AS AN OFF-SHOOT OF TRADITIONAL HINDUISM AND AS A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM

**Rajinder Kaur**

It is very easy to use the word 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism', but difficult to define it. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, "Nothing is more difficult to be defined than Hinduism."

"The word Hindu is said not to be discoverable in ancient Indian literature. Indeed, its first occurrence is reported in a work of eighth century A.D., and there it means 'a people,' and not "an associate of a specific religion."<sup>1</sup> Yet it is clear that it is a very old word. Persians and the people of western and central Asia used it to denote the inhabitants of an area beyond the river Indus. The early name for this river was 'Sindhu,'<sup>2</sup> and from it word 'Hindu' is said to be derived. "A Chinese pilgrim writing in the seventh century A.D., says that the Central Asia called India 'Hindu' (he says Hsintu), but he continues, "this is not at all a common name..... and the most suitable name for this is 'Arya Desha,' which means the Noble Land."<sup>3</sup>

The use of the word in connection with a particular religion is still later. Professor Dasgupta thinks that this usage of it may not date back more than three hundred years. Probably the use of the word comes in with Muslim invasions for differentiating the inhabitants and the foreign rulers. The Arab name for the country being Hindustan.

1. Bouquet A.C., *Hinduism*, Introduction
2. Still commonly used name of this river in the Punjab is "Sindhu."
3. Jawahar Lal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 51.

According to the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Hinduism is the title applied to that form of religion which prevails among the vast majority of the present population of India. In the western world, Hinduism stands as the commonly used title of the specific religion which is sharply distinguishable from Islam."<sup>4</sup> Hinduism as a religion is difficult to be understood. Hinduism lacks a church and clearly defined dogmas. There are no beliefs or institutions which are common to all Hindus<sup>5</sup>, and which may mark them off from others. "Every belief considered as basic to Hindus, has been rejected by one group or the other. Thus the south Indian Shaivite sect of Lingayats reject in theory many of the allegedly basic beliefs of the Hindus, including the revelatory character of the Vedas. This sect also does not believe in the theory of *karma*. The atheistic and hedonistic sect of Charvakas rejected every traditional idea including *dharma*, still they remained Hindus." "Hinduism as a faith is vague, amorphous, many sided, all things to all men. It is hardly possible to define it, or indeed to say precisely whether it is a religion or not, in the usual sense of the term. In its present form as well as in the past, it embraces many beliefs and practices, from the highest to the lowest, often opposed and contradicting each other."<sup>6</sup>

In recent times attempts have been made to define Hinduism. It is considered to be the religion, which has grown and evolved on the soil of India, as a natural consequence of man's quest for truth. The earliest records of religion which have descended to our times, are that of pure nature worship, adoration of the sun, moon, wind, rain, clouds, dawn etc. Anything that impressed the soul with awe or was regarded as capable of exercising good or evil influence became an object not only of adoration but of prayer. However, earth, mountains, rivers, plants, might be supplicated as divine powers, the horse, the cow, the bird of omens and other animals might be invoked.

In the course of centuries the worship of nature and natural objects lead to their personification and thus polytheism took its

4. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

5. *Ibid*.

6. Jawahar Lal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 52.

birth. The dissatisfaction with the various gods lead to theism, which paved the way for monotheism, which in turn culminated in the monism or absolutism of Sankracharya, later to the qualified monism of Ramanuja, and in the end led to the Bhakti movement.

This is, what is commonly understood by Hinduism but there are people who try to make the definition of Hinduism still more comprehensive and all inclusive. In ancient times, the forefathers of the so called 'Hindus' did not speak of their religion as 'Hinduism' but as 'Arya Dharma,' therefore, there are people who under Arya Dharma aim to include all religions of Aryan origin, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Arya Samajists, Hindu Orthodox etc. Such people make Arya Dharma and Hinduism as synonymous terms. Lakshmi Narayan temple of Delhi is a living example of such believers.

Hinduism as the dominant creed of India is an amalgamation of all its evolutionary phases, the worship of nature, polytheism, monotheism, monism or absolutism. Thus it is a jumble of ideas which have not been made but have grown. "It is a jungle not a building. It is a living example of great national paganism, such as might have existed in Europe if Christianity had not become the state religion of the Roman Empire, if there had remained an incongruous jumble of old superstitions, Greek philosophy and oriental cults such as the worship of Sarapis or Mithras."<sup>7</sup> Thus Hinduism comes to be a term applicable to a particular culture, a society, a race rather than a specific religion, as there is no other way of becoming a Hindu except by birth. Hinduism cannot be defined as a religion, but it can be a religious culture, having so many religions and religious practices in its fold.

On the eve of the advent of Sikhism, Hinduism was just a mess of contradictory beliefs and a jumble of ideas and religious practices. Whatever might be the intellectual or philosophical excellence of Hinduism, the religion of an average Hindu was confined to the worship of idols, the observance of certain formalities, the perfor-

7. Eliot, Charles, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. I, p. 41.

mance of some complicated rites, pilgrimage to certain sacred places and bathing in the holy tanks and rivers. Buddhism was on the decline as it had become corrupt and mystical, it had passed into a degraded form of the old Brahmanical faith which it had formerly superseded.

Over the degenerated and degraded condition of Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam had a superiority. Islam was stretching its roots rather deep and fast spreading its wings. "The numerous conversions to Islam were not so much the fruit of active persecution, as the result of the desire to gain the favour of the court or the result of the missionary preachings."<sup>8</sup> Muslim missionaries entered India as early as 712 A.D. There might be political reasons for the fast conversion to Islam but the simple monotheism of the Mohammadans had a definite appeal over the then prevalent Hinduism.<sup>9</sup> Thus Islam was telling upon the very roots of Hindu society, and Hindu religion was in great danger especially in the Punjab, as Punjab had for long been a Muslim dominion and thus had remained cut off from the religious currents of the rest of India.

The numerous converts to Islam had their inherited traditions with them. With the impact of Hinduism, Islam also changed its character. Like the gods of the Hindu pantheon, the *pirs* and *shaheeds* of the Muslims received a hallowed glory and were being worshipped alike. In spite of the changing character of Islam, its monotheism still retained appeal specially when it was the state religion and was being backed by the state. Thus the number of Muslims in India was on the increase. Yet the spirit of both Hinduism and Islam was hidden beneath a mass of formalities and extraneous observances. The unity of Godhead was lost in the worship of numerous *avtars* and divinities; *pirs* and *dargahas*, pilgrimage and empty ritualistic practices had taken the place of the real devotion and superstitions had driven truth away.<sup>10</sup>

8. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 208.

9. Hinduism is a growing and developing religion. It is dynamic in character. What Hinduism is today was not there at that time.

10. Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, p. 18.

There was no religion. As such it was a time of religious chaos. Religion was the monopoly of a few priests, *mullahs* and *pandits*, the common man had to remain satisfied with the performance of certain rites and rituals, the meaning of which he was quite ignorant. Guru Gobind Singh summed up the religious conditions that as, "some were worshipping the stones, others had put 'lingam' around their necks. Some were thinking that God resided in the south, while others were bowing their head towards the west as if He resided there. Some were worshipping the idols, while others were worshipping the dead. In short, everyone was busy in empty rituals and religious practices, without having any enlightenment of God.

Religious tyranny was there, but it was either due to or was the by-product of political tyranny then operative. It was a time of complete political suppression and oppression. The Muslim rulers were at enmity with all things Hindu. Guru Nanak was born at the time of Behlol Lodi. Sikandar Lodi was bent upon destroying Hindu religion. "Sikandar was firmly attached to the Muhammadan religion, and made a point of destroying all Hindu temples. Extra taxes were levied on Hindus, they were openly prosecuted and molested for one petty reason or the other. Their life and property were both in danger."<sup>11</sup>

To the political tyranny was added the social tyranny of the caste system. Hindu society was sharply divided into various castes and it was impossible to cross the barriers of the caste system. The treatment that the high caste Hindus were receiving from their Muslim rulers, they were not reluctant to offer the same type of treatment to their own low caste brothers. The low caste people were considered as untouchables. They were not allowed to enter the temples or listen to the sacred scriptures. They were deprived of religion and God altogether. Thus both earth and heaven were being denied to them.

The tragedy was that the people were tolerating all that without any protest or revolt. In fact Buddhism had for long been

11. Briggs, *op-cit*, vol. 1, p. 586.

the religion of the Punjab, and the Buddhist theory of *karma* and non-violence had a deep rooted effect on the minds of the receptive Punjabees with the result that their marshal spirit was completely crippled, and the Muslim invaders found it quite easy to cross over them. Probably their belief in the law of *karma* made them to reconcile to the wave of suppression let loose by the Muslim rulers on their Hindu subjects. They must have believed that the agony to which they were being subjected must be the result of some evil deeds committed by them in some past life and those who were cruel to them now would be punished for their sins in future, either in that life or in some life yet to come. Thus, they themselves need not make an effort to put an end to the political despotism. The same law of *karma* made the people of the low castes to accept their lot. To be born in a low caste was considered to be the result of some bad deeds committed by them in the past. Thus they need not grumble against their lot as they themselves were responsible for that.

In short at the time of the advent of Sikhism tyranny reigned supreme. It was in such a time that Guru Nanak and his nine successors came as the redeemer. They came to help the indolent and the down-trodden and to show them the path of salvation and make them rise against political and social tyranny. Like the Catholic religion Sikhism came up abruptly as a new religion, by a kind of crisis under the original influence of the inspired soul of Guru Nanak and developed under the personal influence and guidance of his successors. There is no doubt that environment must have influenced the new faith, but they can well have a negative influence. Sikhism is a prophetic religion with a set of prophets and a definite doctrine to reveal to mankind. If sikhism has some affinity with traditional Hinduism or Islam it does not mean that it is an offshoot of the one or the other. Sikhism was not a natural consequence of the synthesis and integration of ideas of the two religions or the natural culmination of Hinduism, as, without Guru Nanak, Sikhism would have been non-existent.

Sikhism is individual in character. Individuality means independence of growth; it is not necessarily unlikeness since man the

world over is the same so far as the aspects of his spirit are concerned. The resemblances between religions are essential traits that must exist between spiritual systems that aim at leading man to a higher life than that of lower passions and appetites. In religion it is said that there is no new thing but the same ideas are worked up again and again. God is one, spiritual experience of union or communion with Him, the gracious boon and converse with Him must also be of the same kind, and a minimum of it must be expressible in the same terms. In this sense all religions are one in essence. According to Bhai Gurdas, Sikhism was the third way of reaching God, the two ways Hinduism and Islam being already existent : *tisar pantk chalayon vad sur guhela*. It is the comparative and pragmatic use, disuse or misuse of the essential characteristics of religion that they become different and contradictory. It is only the political use of religions that they become opposite and hostile to each other.

# SIKHISM : AN EXPERIMENT IN NATIONAL INTEGRATION OF THE COUNTRY

**Taran Singh**

PRINCIPLES which Sikhism observed and worked upon for achieving national integration of India can be studied under the following patterns : scriptures, institutions and traditions of Sikhism :

- (i) The pattern of the Sikh scriptures, the *Guru Granth* and the intentions and principles underlying the same, and the *Dasam Granth*.
- (ii) The Sikh institutions of *sangat* (holy assembly), *pangat* (*langar* or free kitchen) and *gurdwara* (sikh temple).
- (iii) The Sikh tradition of fighting *adharma* and injustice even when it is directed against any other religion, individual or community.

## SIKH SCRIPTURES

The pattern of *Guru Granth* has been so conceived and worked out that it may be able to integrate various religions and *varnas* of India, spiritually, religiously, socially and emotionally. Guru Nanak gave the idea of such a scripture, his successor gurus subscribed to it and worked to collect material for the *Granth*, particularly Guru Arjan, who collected most of the material and contributed major portion of the *Granth* in the form of his *bani* and edited the same in 1604 A. D. Guru Gobind Singh added the hymns of Guru Teg Bahadur to the *Guru Granth* and installed it as the Guru in 1708 A.D., abolishing the personal guruship.

The *Guru Granth* is an edited book, containing the spiritual and devotional writings of the saints of India, gurus of the Punjab



and some bards and devotees of the gurus. The writings of fifteen saints of India belonging to different parts of the country, with their dates ranging between the 12th and 17th centuries, speaking diverse languages, spiritually elevated through diverse faiths, forms of worship and disciplines, coming from high and low castes and *varṇas*, pursuing diverse professions for earning their livelihood, were purposely included in the holy book of the Sikhs. Jaidev, Farid, Ramanand, Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev and Tarlochan are some of the saints of the *Guru Granth*. If the implications of this design or pattern of a book of faith are understood, it will seem to be a unique phenomenon in the history of world religions. The implications are as under.

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in 1469 A.D. but the Sikh book of faith had started coming into being about three centuries before his birth. Jaidev of Bengal and Farid of Punjab had been born in 1170 and 1173 A.D. respectively. The two saints are the first and the earliest whose *bāni* has been included in the *Guru Granth*. Of the thirty-six writers of the *Guru Granth* only six are Sikh gurus of the Punjab while many of the remaining writers are non-Punjabis and non-Sikhs. Jaidev was a brahman of Bengal and realised God through Krishna worship; Namdev and Tarlochan, two friends, a low caste calico-printer and a Brahman, respectively, of Maharashtra were also Krishnites; Ramanand, Kabir and Ravidas: a brahman, a weaver and a cobbler respectively, were from Uttar Pradesh; Farid and Bhikhan were Muslim Sufi fakirs; the eleven bards of the Punjab were Krishna worshippers. The Sikh gurus were Khatri of Punjab and worshippers of the Nirguna to which realisation of all the *bhaktas* or saints, mentioned above had reached in due course. The utterances of all these constitute the *Guru Granth*.

The principle which underlies this pattern of the *Guru Granth* is that every Sikh gives the same reverence to the Sikh gurus which he gives to the saints of Bengal, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Sind etc. He bows to the *Guru Granth* and recites the *bāni* of all the writers included, with same devotion and reverence. In the central Sikh temple of Amritsar as well as in all other historical or local

*gurdwaras*, the hymns of all these saints and gurus of India are sung. The Sikhs pay homage to Muslim and Hindu saints of India, recite their writings with faith, reverence and devotion. Perhaps, it is not so in any other faith of the world.

The intentions of the Sikh *Granth* and the practice of the Sikhs, naturally, can draw nearer the people of Bengal, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, etc. to the Sikhs and vice versa. They develop natural love, respect and identity of views. They are integrated.

This pattern of the *Guru Granth* involves a principle which can make national integration really possible. India being basically spiritual and religious, Indians can be integrated under a practice which guarantees respect and reverence for all the religions, faiths, forms of worship.

Again, in the *Guru Granth*, Sikhism tried an experiment to bring diverse faiths and people together through cultural expressions. Music is an important form of cultural expression. The *Guru Granth* adopted verse as the medium of expression in all thirty-one *ragas* or musical measures of India, mostly classical.

The *ragas* and even the poetic forms and measures, employed in the *Guru Granth*, are likewise the representative ones of various areas and peoples of India as are its contents.\* Perhaps, *ragas* Asa, Suhi and Tilang were chiefly used by the Muslim Sufi fakirs but the gurus and the saints of India also sang in the same *ragas*. Rag Ramkali is the chief *raga* of the yogis but the greatest pieces of Guru Nanak's composition are found in this *raga*. Sri, Gauri, Gujar, Bilawal, Bhairi, Malhar, Parbhati are Aryan *ragas* and the same are used in the *Guru Granth*. Certain *ragas* of the *Guru Granth* as the Malhar and the Basant are seasonal *ragas*, sung at gatherings where people of all faiths, castes and creeds gather. Some of the *ragas* of *Guru Granth*, viz., Gujar, Maru, Tilang were popular in particular areas of India. Guru Nanak composed his hymns in nineteen *ragas*, Guru Amardas in seventeen, Guru Ramdas and Guru Arjan in thirty, Guru Teg Bahadur alone used *raga* Jai Jai Vanti, the 31st *raga* of the *Guru Granth*.

Sikhism experimented to work a synthesis of Vedic and Islamic thoughts and tried to avoid meaningless intricacies and controversies of the traditional schools of philosophy. Some of the saint-writers of the *Guru Granth* attempted the same synthesis. Sikhism rejected the Hindu social philosophy of *varnashrams*, but accepted the philosophical concepts regarding brahman, soul and transmigration. Monotheism was emphasised in Islam and Sikhism did the same. Some philosophical terminology of Islam and traditional schools was adopted with new connotation by the Sikh gurus.

This itself is an effort at integrating various faiths. But still more important is Guru Nanak's attitude towards the six traditional schools and other religions. His attitude is proclaimed in his following hymn in Rag Asa. 'Six are the systems, six their teachers, six their concepts. But the Teacher of teachers in one alone, who assumes many forms. O Lord, in whatever systems are thy praises sung, Save that—that is thy greatness. The seconds, the minutes, the hours, the solar and lunar days, the many seasons, are all created by one. Thus the creator assume many forms, though One'.

Guru Nanak tried to emphasise the highest common factor in all the religions of his time, existing side by side, but clashing with one another unnecessarily out of jealousy. *Varṇas*, castes and religions had disintegrated India and their role is no better even today. Guru Nanak raised a voice against *varṇa* and caste distinctions calling the belief of castes a folly and he called upon all men of different religions to live truthfully. Every man of religion accepts that living truthfully is higher than lip service to lofty ideals and formal elaborate worship. Guru Nanak stressed the ethics, in religions, alongwith theism. He called upon the Hindus to wear the sacred thread of compassion the cotton, contentment the thread, continence the knot, twist the truth thereof, asked the yogi to adopt the symbols of the garb of "contentment the ear-rings, humility the bowl;" and required the Muslims to say the *namaz* or prayer of "mercy the mosque, faith in God the prayer, honest living the Qur'an, humility the circumcision, good conduct the fast". For fashioning the ornament of sterling character, he advised all men to be goldsmiths with "chastity the smithy, patience the smith, understanding the

anvil, knowledge the tools, austerity the fire, fear of God the bellows, devotion to God the pot". This view of religions with emphasis on the practical side of life, should integrate all.

So, Guru Nanak gave the idea of a new type of scriptures, formed a wholesome attitude towards fellow religions and philosophical schools, tried to pick up the essentials from all faiths and leave out the non-essential, worked to shift the emphasis of religions from philosophical controversies and ritualistic tendencies to practical living ; thus providing directions for religious co-existence, philosophical accommodation and social integration.

The *Dasam Granth*, the collection of the writings of Guru Gobind Singh, is also held in high esteem by the Sikhs. In a very large portion of the *Dasam Granth*, Guru Gobind Singh tried to work up a revival of the Indian religious literature, of course, with some martial bias, to make the Indians realize their common heritage and tried to bring them together through pride of that heritage. He composed in classical Indian metres, the Braj language and in his personal style, what are called the *Chandi Charitras* and the twenty-four *avtaras* of Vishnu with the *avtars* of Brahma and Rudra. In the *Dasam Granth*, the *Markanda Puran*, the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabhart*a were reinterpreted by him. He reinterpreted much of the mythological and historical material of India. The *Guru Granth* itself contains numerous references and allusions from the ancient Indian literature, especially from *Purāṇas* and the epics. Guru Gobind Singh employed fifty-two poets in his court to translate various ancient texts of India with the object of unifying people of India through their own literature and culture.

### SIKH INSTITUTIONS

Guru Nanak travelled through the length and breadth of India and even abroad, and men of different faiths gathered round him wherever he went. He helped them come together and they, thereafter formed *sangats*. A *sangat* means a holy assembly or a congregation. Guru Nanak left a particular place to preach his message elsewhere but his devotees at that place continued to assemble

in *sangat*. Thus Sikh *sangats* were established all over India. As a principal, a man of any faith, caste or colour could join a Sikh *sangat*. All had have to sit on the same carpet and eat the same holy communion that was distributed at a conclusion of the service and the prayer. This institution shattered the barriers dividing men of different faiths and ranks and integrated the nation. •

The institution of *pangat* did the same thing more effectively in social settings. A *pangat* means a row of men sitting to partake from *langar* or free kitchen. All men, irrespective of creed, caste, colour or country could and can sit together and eat in a *pangat*. Sikhism experimented with the institution of *pangat* successfully.

Generally *sangats* and *pangats* are held in *gurdwaras*. Any man of any faith can enter any *gurdwara* or Sikh temple and participate in the service. The central Sikh Shrine at Amritsar, known as the Golden Temple has a distinction. The foundation stone of this Sikh temple was laid by a Muslim Sufi divine, Mian Mir. This Sikh temple has four doors which symbolise that any man of any faith can enter this temple from any side.

Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru got built a mosque for the spiritual benefit of his Muslim soldiers. No Sikh guru ever indulged in proselytization. The Sikh gurus asked people to truly practise the teachings of their own religions as all religions were efficacious to give salvation, only if they were practised sincerely. The gurus themselves visited the Hindu and Muslim centres of worship and had intimate relations with Hindu and Muslim divines and often held religious and philosophical dialogues with them in the most cordial atmosphere.

#### SIKH TRADITION

Guru Nanak raised a voice against *adharma*, injustice, political subjugation, social inequality and fanatic religiosity. He risked his life many times in such endeavours. Guru Amardas refused to submit to unjust discrimination. Guru Arjan suffered martyrdom for the freedom of worship, speech and expression. Guru Hargobind fought

for the rights of the down-trodden. But Guru Teg Bahadur's execution in 1675 under orders from Aurangzeb, had a significance and it set a norm for the Sikh concept of sacrifice. The Sikh concept of sacrifice is that a Sikh should fight for his own rights but he should fight as bitterly when *adharma* or injustice is directed against any other person, may be of any creed or religion. Guru Teg Bahadur died for the Hindu religion. The Hindus were the victim of proselytizing aggressiveness of the Mughals. They were weak and could not defend their right of worship in their own free way. Guru Teg Bahadur got up to defend their *dharma* and fought against injustice.

To sum up, right from Guru Nanak, Sikhism was ideally motivated, broad based and nationally inspired. It tried to inspire and carry with it the whole Indian nation. Sikhism was out to fight any type of tyranny and any form of subjugation. Religiously, it stood for tolerance, respect, love and co-operation among all the religions of India ; politically it was intolerant of imperialism of any type and was the sworn enemy of political subjugation ; socially it stood for fraternity, brotherliness and equality. Good of humanity is the real religion of Sikhism, Victory to the Lord, *Wahi guru Ki Fateh* is its ideal ; uphold the truth, *Sat Sri Akal* is its war-cry.

# THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM UPON THE THOUGHT OF GURU NANAK

W. H. McLeod

SIKHISM, writes Dr. A. C. Bouquet, "is the fruit of hybridization between Islam and Hinduism."<sup>1</sup> This is the usual interpretation of the religion of Gurū Nānak and his successors, and amongst western writers it would appear to be a universal assumption. According to this interpretation Sikhism is properly regarded as a blend of Hinduism and Islam, "an outstanding example of conscious syncretism,"<sup>2</sup> a noble attempt to fuse in a single system elements drawn from two separate and largely disparate religions. To quote another metaphor which evidently expresses this same interpretation : "Sikhism was born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam."<sup>3</sup>

Is this interpretation correct? Can Sikhism be regarded as a synthesis of ideas drawn from Hinduism and Islam? In a very broad sense we can accept the truth of this assessment. Other possible interpretations we must certainly reject. Sikhism cannot be located wholly within the area of Hinduism, it cannot be regarded as a sect of Islam, and we cannot accept the claim that it was delivered by direct, unmediated inspiration from on high. We must, however, proceed beyond this general interpretation to a detailed analysis of what it actually means and here we should expect a diversity of opinion. The general interpretation is, in fact, rarely subjected to a careful scrutiny, but it is clear from the brief enunciations which we are given that it almost always assumes a mingling of basic components, a genuine syncretism. With this assumption we are, I feel, bound to disagree. It is, I believe, based upon misleading English translations of Sikh

1. A. C. Bouquet, *Sacred Books of the World*, p. 313.
2. John B. Noss, *Man's Religions*, p. 272.
3. Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. i, p. 17.

scriptures, particularly the works of Gurū Nānak, and to some extent upon an understanding of Persian rather than Puñjābī Sūfism.

In contrast to this "mixture" theory we can postulate an "admixture" theory, and it is this second interpretation which is advanced in this paper. It affirms a basically Hindu origin and holds that Muslim influence, although certainly evident, is nowhere of fundamental significance in the thought of Gurū Nānak. The religion of Gurū Nānak, and so of Sikhism as a whole, is firmly embedded in the Sant tradition of Northern India, in the beliefs of the so-called *Nirguna Sampradāya*. The categories employed by Gurū Nānak are the categories of the Sants, the terminology he uses is their terminology, and the doctrines he affirms are their doctrines. Where we encounter significant exceptions to this rule they point not to manifest Muslim influence but rather to reinterpretation by Gurū Nānak, or to the kind of recasting which has endowed his works with their distinctive clarity and coherence. This still leaves open the possibility of Muslim influence having been mediated to Gurū Nānak through Sant channels, but here too native Indian antecedents almost always appear to be the stronger alternative. In some cases such trails lead us back through the bhaktī tradition ; in others they branch off into Nāth belief. We are bound to acknowledge a considerable area of obscurity when seeking to survey the background of Sant doctrine, but insofar as it can be understood it generally points us back to Indian tradition, not to any version of Islam.

Let it not be supposed, however, that concepts issuing from Muslim sources are totally absent, or that the thought of Gurū Nānak contains nothing which suggests Muslim influence. This would not be correct. The Muslim contribution to the thought of Gurū Nānak is not of fundamental importance, nor is it to be dismissed wholly insignificant. This leads us to pose two specific questions relating to this general question of Muslim influence. First, from what Muslim sources did the influence come ? Secondly, what distinctively Muslim elements or other evidence of Muslim influence can be distinguished in the thought of Gurū Nānak ?

The first question has already been answered many times. The source of such Muslim influence as can be detected in the works of Gurū



Nānak has been identified as the thought of the Sūfīs. Two factors seen to point unmistakably to this conclusion. The first is the evident affinity between much that we find in Sūfism and much that is characteristic both of the Sant tradition and of the thought of Gurū Nānak. Secondly, and in evident support of the first assumption, there are Gurū Nānak's explicit rejections, or rather reinterpretations,\* of conventional Islam. The conventional Islam of his time obviously impressed Gurū Nānak as essentially a religion of external authority and external fulfilment. For Gurū Nānak dependence upon an external authority such as the *Sharī'at* and upon such exercises as the prescribed *namāz* could be meaningful only if the external authority and practice expressed a vital inner meaning. This they had manifestly, and inevitably, ceased to do and so we have Gurū Nānak's characteristic insistence upon the need to reinterpret external expressions of religion in a manner which amounted to a total denial of their validity.

*mihar masīti sidaku musalā haku halālu ku āṇu*  
*saram sunati sīlu rojā hohu musālamāṇu*  
*karaṇī kābā sachu pīrukalamā karam nivāṇ*  
*tasabī sā tisu bhāvasī nānak rakhai lāj*<sup>4</sup>

Make mercy your mosque, faith your prayer-mat, and  
 righteousness your Qur' ān.  
 Make humility your circumcision, uprightness your fasting,  
 and so you will be a (true) Mussulman.  
 Make good works your *Kā'bah*, Truth your pīr, and  
 compassion your creed and your prayer.  
 Make the performance of what pleases (God) your  
 rosary and, Nānak, he will uphold your honour.

4. *Vār Mājh*, ślok 1 of *pauri* 7, pp. 140-1. Cf. also *Siri Rāgu* 28, p. 24 : *Vār Siri Rāgu*, ślok 1 of *pauri* 4, p. 84 ; *Vār Mājh*, ślok 3 of *pauri* 7, and ślok 1 of *pauri* 8, p. 141 ; *Vār Āsā*, ślok 1 of *pauri* 6, p. 465 ; *Dhanāsari* 7, p. 662. In this and subsequent footnotes page numbers which are not otherwise identified refer to the standard printed editions of the *Ādi Granth*. It should be noted that Gurū Nānak's criticisms are directed not at Muslims as such, but at the dominant interpretation of Islam with its considerable stress upon external religion. In the works of Gurū Nānak, brahmans, yogis, and a variety of ascetics are criticised with even greater frequency for precisely the same reason.

Obviously there was no affinity with conventional Islam and any constituents which may have come directly from this source through the power of pervasive influence rather than through any conscious acceptance of its credentials.

This would appear, at first sight, to be the answer to our question concerning the source of Muslim influence in the thought of Gurū Nānak, but before accepting this answer let us examine it. This we must do as it invites misunderstanding in two respects. It implies, in the first place, a direct confrontation between Gurū Nānak and various Sūfīs. Such meetings presumably took place, but we should not assume that this was the only channel of Sūfī influence in the case of Gurū Nānak. Secondly, the answer implies a clear-cut distinction between Sūfism on the one hand and orthodox Islam on the other. This does not correspond to the condition of Islam in the Puñjāb of Gurū Nānak. We may acknowledge that Sūfism was the source which we are seeking, but let us be clear what we mean by Sūfism in this context.

The first of these potential misunderstandings can be dealt with briefly. A comparison of the works of Gurū Nānak with those of his Sant predecessors will at once reveal that a measure of the discernible Sūfī influence in his thought had already entered the thought of the Saints. The traces of Sūfī influence which appear in such concepts as the divine immanence are already to be found in the works of Gurū Nānak's Sant predecessors and were evidently mediated to him in this manner. This should not mislead us into assuming that the Sūfī influence transmitted in this manner was substantial, but it is at least arguable that the Sant works provided the principal channel along which Sūfī influences passed into the thought of Gurū Nānak.

The second of the potential misunderstandings requires lengthier treatment. Here we are concerned with the possibility of direct influence. The nature and extent of direct Sūfī influence upon Gurū Nānak can be appreciated only in the light of an understanding of contemporary Puñjābī Sūfism, the variety of Sūfī belief with which he would have come in contact. Puñjābī Sūfism of Gurū Nānak's time should not be confused with classical Sūfism. For many the

mention of Sūfism will evoke thoughts of Junaid, Hallāj, Ghazālī, and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. These were the great figure of the Sūfī movement and we quite rightly associate them with classical Sūfism. They do not, however, serve as representatives of the Puñjābī Sūfism of our period. Puñjābī Sūfism, as distinct from Arabic or Persian Sūfism, will suggest the names of Shaikh Farīd-u'd-dīn Ganj-i-Shakar,<sup>5</sup> Shāh Husain, Bulhe Shāh, Vāras, and Hāsham. Of these, all except Shaikh Farīd can be excluded from our discussion as they came later than Gurū Nānak. Shaikh Farīd should certainly be considered, but we cannot regard him as a representative of the Puñjābī Sūfism of Gurū Nānak's time, and nor can we assume that his teachings has descended unchanged. Indeed, we are not in a position to know with any assurance the full range of Shaikh Farīd's teachings<sup>6</sup> and are frequently compelled to fall back upon assumption rather than upon a trustworthy source.

This same conclusion must also apply to our understanding of the Puñjābī Sūfism which Gurū Nānak would have encountered, but the assumptions can be made with a certain cautious assurance. Much depends upon our decision concerning the Farīd *bāñī* which is recorded in the *Ādi Granth*. There appear to be only two possible interpretations of these four *śabads*<sup>7</sup> and such of the *śloke* included in the collection *Salok Sekh Farīd ke*<sup>7</sup> as cannot be ascribed to one of the Gurūs. The first possibility is that they are the work of Shaikh Ibrāhīm, the contemporary incumbent of Shaikh Farīd's *gaddī* in Pāk Paṭṭan who is sometimes referred to as Farīd the Second. The alternative explanation is that they represent the works of a number of occupants of the Pāk Paṭṭan *gaddī* as they have emerged after a period of oral circulation. Some portions may go back to the original Farīd himself, but it is impossible to assume that the purity of any such portion would have survived the period of oral transmission.

5. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami. *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-u'd-din Ganj-i-Shakar*. p. 87

6. Two *śabads* in *Rūg Āsā*, p. 488, and two in *Rūg Sūhi*, p. 794.

7. *Ādi Granth*, pp. 1377-84.

The second of these alternatives appears to be the more likely as some of the *śloks* seem to point back to the original Farīd.<sup>8</sup> In either case, however, what the *śabads* and *śloks* offer us is not an expression of Farīd's own Sūfism but illustrations of the Puñjābī Sūfism of a later period. Whereas Farīd was evidently close to the traditions of classical Sūfism the Farīd *bānī* in the *Ādi Granth* represents a marked divergence. It offers us not classical Sūfism but a variety which has been strongly influenced by Sant concepts.<sup>9</sup>

This accommodation to Sant belief signifies one development within the Sūfism of the Puñjāb prior to and during the time of Gurū Nānak.<sup>10</sup> A concurrent and much more widespread development was a movement towards orthodox Sunnī Islam, matched by a

8. This cannot be affirmed with complete assurance. The *śloks* which seem to carry us back to Farīd may be the work of successors, or may represent legends which have come to be attached to his name. For discussions of the authorship question see Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, op. cit., pp. 121-2, and Lajwanti Rama Krishna, *Puñjābī Śūfī Poets*, pp. 6-7.
9. The characteristic Sūfī terminology has not completely disappeared as we do meet such expressions as *dilahu muhabati* and *isak* (*ishq*) *khudāi*, the names Allah and Sāhib, and a single example of erotic imagery (*ślok* 30). Most of the terms which we associate with Sūfī theory and practice are, however, totally absent, and with the exception of the words *daries* and *sabr* none recur with the frequency we should expect. In contrast to this lack of typical Sūfī expressions we find in these same *śabads* and *śloks* several examples of Sant terminology used in senses which accord completely with Sant doctrine. *Man* is a common word and other Sant terms are *nām*, *sach* and *sachiā*, *gurū*, and *sādḥ saṅgh*.  
This aspect of Puñjābī Sūfism cannot be explained by the fact that our sources for this period are in Puñjābī instead of Persian. In the first place, there are fundamental features of classical Sūfism which are covered by neither Puñjābī words nor borrowed Persian terms. Secondly, there are Sant terms which represent Sant concepts and not mere translations of corresponding Sūfī concepts. It must be stressed that we are here dealing with Puñjābī Sūfism. The movement towards Hinduism in general and Sant belief in particular was evidently more pronounced in the Puñjāb than in other parts of India. See Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, pp. 136-7.
10. Subsequent developments, particularly towards the end of the seventeenth century, carried Puñjābī Sūfism even further towards Hinduism. Lajwanti Rama Krishna, op. cit., pp. xvii-xix.

movement within orthodox Islam towards the Sūfism of the period. The dominant pattern seems to have been a considerable interchange of theory and practice between Sūfī and Sunnī Islam, and the result a popular Islam which combined characteristic features of both, though frequently in a debased form. Gurū Nānak indicates this condition in references which place the Sūfīs under the 'same condemnation as other Muslims.

*kājī sekh bhekh fakīrā  
vaḍe kahāvahi haumai tani pīrā  
kālu na chhoḍai binu satigur kī dhīrā*<sup>11</sup>

Qāzīs, shaikhs, and those who wear the faqīr's robe call themselves great, but within their bodies is the pain of *haumai*. Without the aid of the True Gurū they cannot evade death.

The leaders of the orthodox, the Sūfī mastes, and those who claimed to be followers of the Sūfī way, all are astray.<sup>12</sup>

Both of these developments are significant in the context of a discussion concerning the influence of Islam upon the thought of Gurū Nānak. The significance of the first, which relates to the more refined variety of Pañjābī Sūfism, is that insofar as this particular type of Sūfism exercised an influence upon Gurū Nānak it would tend to have been a mediated Sant influence rather than a distinctively Sūfī contribution. Its accomodation to Sant belief, together with its decline from earlier greatness, would have deprived it of much that we regard as characteristically Sūfī. The second development bears testimony to a variety of popular Sūfism which, because of its compromise with the external emphasis of conventional Islam, could not have brought any strong influence to bear upon Gurū Nānak. This does not mean, however, that it had no influence. Its pervasive quality makes it at least possible that in terms of direct influence this

11. *Gauri aṣṭ* 14 (7), p. 227.

12. Cf. also : *Sirī Rāgu aṣṭ* 17 (3), p. 64 ; *Vār Mājhi*, *ślok* 1 of *paurī* 13, p. 143 ; *Basant* 3, p. 1169 ; *Basant Hīṇḍol* 8, p. 1191. Note also *Vār Mallhār*, *paurī* 9, p. 1282, where the pīrs share in the same condemnation as Nāths, ascetics, and Siddhs.

popular Sūfism was actually a more important source than personal contacts between Gurū Nānak and representatives of the more refined variety of Sūfism.

Let us carry this question of personal contact and direct influence further and attempt to understand something of the manner in which the contact took place. In seeking to answer this aspect of our question we can work from what purports to be external evidence, from the internal evidence provided by Gurū Nānak's own works, and from reasonable assumption. The external evidence is provided by the *janam-sākhīs* and must, I believe, be largely rejected as unreliable. We have, for example, the *janam-sākhī* record of a period of instruction from a *mullāh* during Gurū Nānak's childhood.<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that we can safely accept such a period as a proven event, for the *janam-sākhīs* do not possess the necessary authority, particularly as far as the Gurū's childhood is concerned. The same must be said concerning the *janam-sākhī* records of Gurū Nānak's travels. The one point at which the *janam-sākhīs* do appear to record an acceptable instance of contact with a Sūfī is in their accounts of Gurū Nānak's meeting with Shaikh Ibrāhīm.<sup>14</sup> In this case, however, the meeting must have taken place after the substance of Gurū Nānak's thought had been definitively formulated. Moreover, the *janam-sākhīs* probably offer an essentially correct interpretation of the contact when they project it as a case of Gurū Nānak giving rather than taking.

The *janam sākhīs* provide us with little reliable assistance and we must accordingly turn to the internal evidence. The evidence offered by Gurū Nānak's own work is open to a variety of interpretations, and what follows is tentative rather than assured. We may begin by affirming that Gurū Nānak's works testify to the fact that he certainly knew the terminology of the Sūfīs. The following *śloka* makes this clear :

13. *Miharbān JS*, goṣṭ 6 ; *Purātan JS*, sākhī 3 ; *Gyān-ratanāvalī*, sākhī 45. The location in the *Bālā* tradition varies with the different versions.

14. *Miharbān JS*, goṣṭs 147-49 ; *Purātan JS*, sākhī 32 ; *Gyān ratanāvalī*, sākhīs 36-37.

*hukamī rajāī sākhatī daragah sachu kabūlu  
 sāhibu lekhā maṅgasī duniā dekhi na bhūlu  
 dil daravānī jo kare daravesī dilu rāsi  
 isak muhabatī nānakā lekhā karate fāsi*<sup>15</sup>

We must, however, add that this *ślok* is an isolated exception to the general pattern of Gurū Nānak's style. There appears to be little doubt that it represents a direct address to a Sūfī audience, but the fact that it is an exception suggests that his direct contacts with the kind of Sūfīs who would use this language cannot have been frequent. It may be argued that the general absence of such expressions is a result not of infrequent contacts but of a conviction on Gurū Nānak's part that this kind of Sūfī was already on the right path and in need of little assistance. This is difficult to accept, for had his direct contacts with them been both frequent and friendly we should surely have found more evidence of Sūfī influence, both in terms of their beliefs and of the small portion of traditional terminology which had been carried over into Pañjābī. If, on the other hand, his contacts had been frequent and unfriendly we should have expected several *śabads* and *śloks* of a manifestly dialectic character directed against the Sūfīs. We have compositions of this kind which are obviously directed against Nāthi yogīs, but only occasional references aimed at the Sūfīs.

The evidence of Gurū Nānak's own works seems to indicate not a regular direct contact with members of Sūfī orders, but rather the kind of informal contact with ordinary Muslims which would have been inevitable in his circumstances. Amongst those Muslims there would certainly be some strict Sunnis and we can assume that there would also be a number who might fitly be described as Sūfīs. The majority would, however, represent in varying degrees the dominant blend of modified orthodoxy and debased Sūfism. Contacts of this kind would explain the expressions in Gurū Nānak's works which sound like echoes of the Qur'ān, they would explain the grouping of Sūfī and Sunnī in his criticisms of external religion, and they would explain the paucity of references which point to direct Sūfī influence.

15. *Vār Mūrū*, *ślok* 1 of *paurī* 12, p. 1090.

The answer to our first question, the question concerning the sources of Muslim influence, can now be given in summary form. The source of this influence was Sūfism, but the influence was communicated in two ways and it was communicated by differing varieties of Sūfism. The primary influence appears to have been indirect. Sūfism had already exercised a limited influence upon Sant belief and such influence was subsequently mediated to Gurū Nānak as a part of the Sant synthesis. The secondary influence was communicated by means of direct contact. In some small measure this direct influence may have come through contact with exponents of a relatively refined Sūfism, but the principal source of direct influence appears to have been the popular variety which had blended with orthodox Islam and was to some considerable extent indistinguishable from it.

We turn now to our second question. What distinctively Muslim elements can be distinguished in the thought of Gurū Nānak, and what other evidence is there of Muslim influence? At first sight these elements appear to be numerous and the influence to be strong, for we find in his works many features which have obvious affinities with Sūfī concepts. There is an emphasis upon the unity of God, a revolution in creation, the paradox of God transcendent as well as immanent, an expression of God in terms of light, a perverse human organ<sup>16</sup> which requires purification, a doctrine of grace, an emphasis upon the suffering involved in separation from the Beloved, a concept of *nām simaran* which appears to combine elements of both the *dhikr* and *murāqabat* of the Sūfīs, an ascent to union through a number of stages, a purging of self and ultimate union which, although they are nowhere explicitly defined, do not appear to be inconsistent with the Sufi notions of *fanā'* and *baqā'*. He also shares with many Sūfīs a belief in the needlessness of asceticism on the one hand, and upon the snare of worldly wealth on the other. To these evident parallels with Sūfī belief and expression we should also add the references which appear to be obvious echoes of the Qur'ān.<sup>17</sup>

16. Gurū Nānak's *man* and the *dil-rūh-sirr* complex of the Sūfīs.

17. Cf. *Japji* 2, p. 1.



This is an impressive list and one which seems to suggest that Sūfism must certainly have exercised a considerable influence in the formation of Gurū Nānak's beliefs. Before we draw this conclusion, however, we must consider a number of features which point in the opposite direction. In the first place there is the conspicuous lack of Sūfī terminology in the works of Gurū Nānak. Characteristic Sūfī terms such as *dhikr*, *khauf*, *tawakkul*, *yaqīn*, *murāqaba*, *irāda*, *ma'rifat*, *talib*, and *tauba* are either rare or totally absent. Even when such words make an occasional appearance they are not generally used in a sense implying the precise meaning which they would possess in Sūfī usage<sup>18</sup> and in some cases they are introduced with the patent intention of providing a reinterpretation of their meaning.<sup>19</sup> In contrast with this relative absence of Sūfī terms we find a wealth of Sant terminology and imagery derived from Hindu sources. Almost all of his basic terminology is of native Indian derivation. In choosing names of God his preference is strongly for Hindu names, and when dealing with a concept which has obvious affinities with Sūfī belief he will almost always use a non-Sūfī term.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, we must observe that although there are certainly strong resemblances to Sūfī thought, almost all of the evident affinities can, with equal cogency, be traced back to native Indian sources. This is not to affirm that we must in all cases seek an Indian source; merely that an apparent affinity need not necessarily point to a Sūfī source. Moreover, we must bear in mind the complex interchange of influences which had affected Sūfism, particularly the Sūfism of India. Notions which at first sight might appear to be traceable to Sūfī sources may in some cases have pedigrees which carry them back through Sūfism to an earlier Indian source.<sup>21</sup>

18. *Dil* is the most common example.

19. Eg. *faqir* and *darves*. The description of Gurū Nānak himself as a 'faqir' is to be ascribed to the *janam-sākhis* and oral traditions, not to his own works. In the *janam-sākhis* and oral tradition it is, of course, used in its popular sense as a synonym for *sādhu* or *sant*, not in its strict Sūfī sense.

20. *Sat* or *such*, *haqiqat*; *joti*, not *nūr*; *man*, not *sirr*; *laumai*, not *nafs*; *bhāu*, *piār*, or *prem*, not *ishq*.

21. S. M. Ikram (ed. Ainslie T. Embree), *Muslim Civilization in India*, p. 123.

An illustration of this point is provided by the figure of the bride awaiting the divine spouse, a conventional image which expresses the soul's yearning for God and which symbolises the mystical union crowning the soul's ascent to God. Gurū Nānak inherited the image from the Sant tradition and used it frequently in his works.<sup>22</sup> This same figure is to be found in Sūfī compositions. In classical Persian Sūfism the devotee is generally cast in the male role, but Indian Sūfism had reversed the roles and as a result we find a Sūfī usage in striking consonance with Sant usage.<sup>23</sup> This does not, however, mean that the Sants received the image from the Sūfīs. The figure has a lengthy history in native Indian tradition and there seems to be little doubt that it was from this source that the Sant tradition received it. Sūfī usage may well have provided some encouragement, but in doing so it would have been mediating, in some measure at least, the native Indian original. The fact that Indian Sūfism had reversed the roles of male and female strongly suggests a response to its environment.

A third reason for exercising caution in our comparisons with Sūfī belief is the fact that in some fundamental respects Gurū Nānak's thought is in direct conflict with that of the Sūfīs. The obvious example of this is his acceptance of the doctrines of *karma* and transmigration.<sup>24</sup> We should also observe his denial of the need for esoteric perception,<sup>25</sup> the contrast between the human preceptors of the Sūfī orders (*shaikh*, *pīr*, or *murshid*) and Gurū Nānak's understanding of an

22. Cf. *Āsā* 10, 14, 26, 27 and 35, pp. 351-9 *passim*; *Sūhi Chhant* 1, 2, 3, 4, pp. 763-6. For examples of usage by earlier Sants see Kabir, *Gauri* 23, 50, and 65, pp. 328, 333-4, 337-8; *Āsā* 24 and 30, pp. 482, 483; *Sūhi* 2, p. 792, Nāmdev, *Bhairau* 4, p. 1164. Ravidās, *Sūhi* 1, p. 793. See also *Kabir-granthāvalī* (*dohā*), *āṅg* 3, 11, 36, and 52.

23. Sant usage of this connubial imagery generally lacks the frankly erotic expression which may be found in some Sūfī works.

24. These doctrines eventually penetrated Pañjābi Sufism (Lajwanti, Rama Krishna, *op.cit.*, p. xviii), but there is no evidence to suggest that they had done so by the time of Gurū Nānak.

25. Cf. *Dhanāsari*, pp. 13, 663 :

*sabh mahi joti joti hai soi*  
*tis dai chānaṇi sabh mahi chānaṇu hoi*

inner voice of God (the *gurū*), and the differing roles ascribed to the operation of divine grace.

Fourthly, we should note once again the evidence which Gurū Nānak himself offers of his own opinion concerning the leaders of the Sūfī orders. As we have already seen, the shaikhs and pīrs suffer the same condemnation as the qāzīs and mullāhs.<sup>26</sup>

These four considerations must restrain us from any hasty acceptance of significant Sūfī influence, although in themselves they do not necessarily rule it out. There remains the possibility that such influence has been communicated through Sant channels after having been assimilated to the total Sant pattern and to the terminology of the Sants. There also remains the possibility that although distinctively Muslim terms are relatively uncommon some of them may nevertheless express borrowings of fundamental importance.

To test these possibilities we shall consider the more important points which are offered as instances of Muslim influence. The first such instance is the claim that Gurū Nānak's monotheism represents a debt to Islam.<sup>27</sup> In this respect we can certainly acknowledge the likelihood of strong encouragement from Islam, but it is surely going too far to identify Islam as the actual source.<sup>28</sup> Theism extends far back in the religious history of India and the monotheistic strain is already evident within Hindu *bhakts* before the weight of Muslim influence came upon it. The antecedents of the Sant movement are to be found primarily in the bhakti tradition and this would seem to be the true source of its monotheism. Sant antecedents also include the Nāth tradition and Nāth emphasis upon unity would presumably have strengthened the bhakti inheritance at this point. Islamic insistence upon the Divine Unity can certainly be accepted as another strengthening influence, but not as the actual source.

26. Cf. also Gurū Arjan's *Mārū Solahū* 12, pp 1083-4.

27. "Its [Sikhism's] basic conviction—monotheism—is drawn from Mohammedanism." John B. Noss, *op.cit.* p. 272.

28. Aziz Ahmad, *op.cit.*, p. 142

A second obvious possibility would appear to be Gurū Nānak's doctrine of the *hukam*. Here we have an Arabic word expressing a concept which seems to reflect a distinctively Muslim doctrine. The actual word must obviously be accepted as a borrowing from the terminology of Islam, but not the doctrine which it expresses. Translators of the works of Gurū Nānak have encouraged misunderstanding at this point by rendering *hukam* as 'Will' and so implying, whether intentionally or not, that we have here a concept modelled on the Islamic doctrine of the Will of God. The *hukam* of Gurū Nānak is best translated as 'divine order' and may be defined as the divinely instituted and maintained principle governing the existence and movement of the universe. It is a constant principle, and to the extent to which it can be comprehended it functions according to a predictable pattern. This pattern of regularity and consistency distinguishes it from the Islamic concept.<sup>29</sup> In Islam the divine Will, if not actually capricious is at least 'unpledged', whereas the *hukam* of Gurū Nānak's usage is definitely pledged and dependable. The word has obviously come from Islamic sources, but not the basic doctrine which it covers.<sup>30</sup> As in the case of our first instance the most we can allow at this point is a measure of encouragement.

Other instances can be dealt with summarily. We may observe without comment that Gurū Nānak's doctrine of *nām simaran* does not correspond to the Sufi technique of *dhikr*, and that the five *khaṇḍs*, or "realms", of *Jaṭṭi*<sup>31</sup> do not correspond even remotely to the *maqāmat* of the Sūfīs.<sup>32</sup> A distinct resemblance can be perceived

29. It is significant that the law of *karma* is regarded as an expression of the *hukam*. The concept of the *hukam* provides a clear illustration of the manner in which Gurū Nānak's thought transcended that of his predecessors. The term is to be found in the works of Kabir, and in a sense which points towards Gurū Nānak's meaning (Cf. Kabir *Mārū* 4, pp. 1103-4.) It is, however, only in the works of Gurū Nānak that we find the developed doctrine occupying a position of fundamental importance.

30. If we are to seek an Islamic parallel to Gurū Nānak's doctrine of the *hukam* the closest would probably be the notion of "the Reality of Muhammad" (*al-Haqīqat al-Muhammadiya*) or "the Reality of Realities" (*Haqīqat al-haqū'iq*). A. J. Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 100.

31. *Jaṭṭi* 34-37, pp 7-8.

32. A much closer resemblance is to be found in the stages enunciated in the *Yoga-vasīṣṭha*. See S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. ii, p. 264.

between Gurū Nānak's descriptions of the actual climax of the spiritual ascent and the Sūfī concepts of *fanā'* and *baqā'*, but the comparison is difficult to draw as the descriptions concern what both Gurū Nānak and the Sūfīs would regard as indescribable. The terms used by Gurū Nānak to express this condition are Hindu<sup>33</sup> and we do not find in his works the characteristic Sūfī emphasis upon visible ecstasy.

This process will eliminate much that has been regarded as evidence of Muslim influence, but we should not press it to the point of denying all such influence. Occasionally one encounters in the works of Gurū Nānak an expression or an image which clearly seems to have been borrowed from Muslim sources. An example of this is provided by the 'veil' which conceals the Truth from man's perception.<sup>34</sup> A more important, though much less direct instance of Muslim influence may possibly be the weight attached to the equality of all men in matters religious. If we allow the egalitarian emphasis of Islam as a significant influence upon the bhakti movement we may perhaps allow it as a mediated influence in the case of Gurū Nānak, although it is difficult to imagine his having omitted this teaching under any circumstances.

Almost immediately we seem to be moving away from the obvious to the merely possible, and to the 'merely possible' we may add an issue which concerns Gurū Nānak's doctrine of God. In his works we find a strong emphasis upon the absolute sovereignty of God, and statements to the effect that if God chooses to withhold His gracious glance from a particular person there can be no hope of salvation for that person. These statements may amount to no more than a natural corollary of Gūru Nānak's concept of divine

33. *Sahaj*, *param pad*, *chauthā pad*, *turiā pad*, and *amar pad*. His usage of the Nāth term *dasam duār* also relates to this condition. Note also the term *sach khaṇḍ*.

34. *Japji* 1, p. 1. Gurū Nānak's application is, however, distinctively his own, for he endues the 'veil' with the meaning of *haumai*. (Vir Singh, *Santhyā Sri Gurū Granth Sāhib*, vol. i, p. 48.) We should also note that the popular Sūfī metaphor of intoxication is not common in Gurū Nānak's works, although the apocryphal saying *nām khumārī nānakā chārī rahe dīn rāt* has enjoyed wide circulation.

grace, but it seems reasonable to assume that the measure of stress which he lays upon this negative corollary may be a result of Sūfī influence. Elsewhere in his works we find the emphasis laid upon the positive corollary, namely that God in His grace chooses to impart enlightenment to men who would otherwise fail to perceive the divine self-revelation in the created world around them and in their own inward experience. This accords much more naturally with his total theology than does the negative corollary. The most likely explanation for the latter appears to be that the weight of Muslim emphasis upon the absolute nature of the divine authority has led to the engrafting into Gurū Nānak's theology of a distinctively Muslim expression of that divine authority.

Beyond this it is impossible to proceed with firm assurance. It seems intrinsically probable that the Sūfīs must have at least encouraged latent tendencies, but it is not possible to identify these with complete certainty. Gūru Nānak's doctrine of the unity of God we have already acknowledged as a strong candidate in this respect, and it seems safe to grant the same recognition in the case of the characteristic Sant emphasis upon the divine immanence, a feature of basic importance in the thought of Gurū Nānak. Another example may perhaps be his stress upon the formless quality of God (*nirāṅkā*r).

The conclusion to which our examination<sup>•</sup> points is that Sūfī influence evidently operated upon the thought of Gurū Nānak, but that in no case can we accord this influence a fundamental significance. Sūfī and Qur'ānic imagery have certainly made their impress, and there must have been encouragement of tendencies which accorded with Sūfī teaching, but no fundamental components can be traced with assurance to an Islamic source. Gurū Nānak's principal inheritance from the religious background of his period was unquestionably that of the Sant tradition and evidence of other independent influences is relatively slight. We must indeed acknowledge that the antecedents of Sant belief are by no means wholly clear and that within the area of obscurity there may be important features which derived primarily from Sūfī sources. The complexity of the subject leaves appreciable room for doubt and we are accordingly bound to own that at least

some of our conclusions must be regarded as tentative, not as definitively established. It appears, however, that Sant belief owes none of its basic constituents to the Sūfīs. For Sant belief the major source is to be found in the bhakti movement, with Nāth theory entering as a significant secondary source.

Let me conclude by repudiating an impression which may have been suggested by my treatment of this subject. Let me state categorically that I do not deny the originality of Gurū Nānak's thought. This misunderstanding is liable to occur in any discussion which relates to antecedents and influences, and I am concerned that it should not arise from this paper. The fact that a man works with elements which have been provided by others should not necessarily suggest that the product of his labours is not peculiarly his own. Others will supply the threads, but the pattern which he weaves with them may be a design of singular originality. In the case of Gurū Nānak this was certainly the result. We may trace the threads to a variety of sources ; the ultimate pattern remains uniquely his own.

## **PART FOUR**





## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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- 136, l. 5 : *for* unchargeable *read* un-  
 changeable ; l. 12 : *for* discuss *read*  
 discus
- 142, l. 24 : *for* the God's *read* God's
- 143, l. 6 : *for* Wonderous *read* Wondrous
- 145, l. 23 : *for* shiboletths *read* shibboleths
- 155, l. 35 : *delete* and
- 156, l. 27 : *for* only *read* alone
- 157, l. 27 : *for* home the *read* home to the
- 158, l. 1 : *for* bear *read* bears
- 160, l. 2 : *for* who *read* and
- 162, l. 7 : *for* with *read* within ; l. 8 :  
*for* defty *read* deft ; l. 14 : *for*  
 similies *read* similes
- 169, l. 24 : *for* from to time *read* from  
 time to time
- 181, l. 21 : *for* Sikhism *read* Hinduism
- 188, l. 20 : *for* on *read* in
- 189, l. 8 : *for* time *read* times
- 194, l. 12 : *transpose* colourful and revolu-  
 tionary ; l. 13 : *for* beetle *read* betel
- 196, l. 1 : *for* practise *read* practice
- 197, l. 8 : *for* Sikh *read* Muslim ; l. 19 :  
*for* Sikh *read* Muslim
- 200, l. 6 : *for* with *read* between ; l. 13 :  
*for* practise *read* practice
- 204, l. 24 : *for* Muslims *read* Sikhs
- 209, l. 18 : *delete* than
- 217 : *for* JUNE *read* SEPTEMBER
- 222, l. 21 : *for* corrolary *read* corollary
- 223, l. 1 : *for* wondering *read* wandering
- 224, l. 25 : *for* imminent *read* immanent
- 230, l. 26 : *for* left *read* felt
- 231, l. 18 : *for* defeatism *read* defeat
- 234, l. 9 : *for* 'our' *read* 'Gur'

- 238, l. 1 : *for* in accordance with *read* According to ; l. 22 : *for* monoism *read* monism
- 240, l. 20 : *for* exemplars *read* exemplars
- 241, l. 20 : *for* humility *read* humiliation
- 247, l. 13 : *for* monasceticism *read* monasticism
- 248, l. 17 : *for* chain *read* chains
- 251, l. 26 : *for* hence now *read* thence-forward
- 252, l. 20 : *for* win *read* win victory or win
- 253, l. 13 : *for* referred *read* referred to
- 258, l. 19 : *for* sechisms *read* schisms
- 259, l. 13 : *for* a Sikh *read* a-Sikh
- 260, l. 8 : *for* confluence *read* confluence
- 262, l. 12 : *for* every *read* very
- 266, l. 28 : *for* from *read* form
- 275, l. 23 : *for* Sikh is *read* Sikh was
- 277, l. 6 : *for* none *read* one
- 278, l. 5 : *for* and *read* or ; l. 16 : *for* Asia *read* Asians
- 280, l. 3 : *for* obsolutism *read* absolutism
- 282, l. 6 : *for* that *read* then
- 283, l. 3 : *for* marshal *read* martial
- 284, l. 12 : *for* the *read* in the ; l. 13 : *for* religion *read* religions ; l. 14 : *for* the *read* by the
- 288, l. 14 : *for* in *read* is ; l. 33 : *for* Cod *read* God
- 290, l. 2 : *for* principal *read* principle ; l. 3 : *delete* have
- 293, l. 28 : *for* dismissed *read* dismissed as
- 295, l. 2 : *for* through *read* came through
- 301, l. 21 : *for* revolution *read* revelation
- 311, l. 1 : *for* I *read* A ; l. 3 : *for* Sikhism and modern India *read* Structure and character of Sikh society
- 315, l. 1 : *for* II *read* B
- 316, l. 19 : *for* ganeris *read* generis
- 317, l. 3 : *for* universal man *read* social ideal
- 318, l. 7 : *for* Archamenid *read* Achamenid ; l. 9 : *for* in *read* is ; l. 29 : *for* stary *read* stray
- 319, l. 4 : *for* that *read* said that ; l. 5 : *for* said *read* and
- 323, l. 32 : *for* Langyats *read* Langayats
- 324, l. 24 : *for* has *read* had
- 326, l. 1 : *for* III *read* C
- 327, l. 3 : *for* quaintessence *read* quintessence
- 328, l. 25 : *for* practiced *read* practised
- 331, l. 2 : *for* to *read* of
- 332, l. 5 : *for* past *read* part ; l. 21 : *for* the *read* to















